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SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

By

JAMES H. SNOWDEN

The Basal Beliefs of Christianity.

The World a Spiritual System.

Can We Believe in Immortality?

The Coming of the Lord.

Is The World Growing Better?

The Personality of God.

A Wonderful Night.

A Wonderful Morning.

Scenes and Sayings in the Life of Christ.

The Psychology of Religion.

A Summer Across the Sea.

The Truth About Christian Science.

The Meaning of Education.

The Attractions of the Ministry.

The City of Twelve Gates.

# SNOWDEN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS

OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS, IMPROVED

UNIFORM SERIES: COURSE FOR

1923

BY

JAMES H. SNOWDEN

SECOND

ANNUAL VOLUME

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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# PREFACE

## The Improved Uniform International Lessons

The treatment of the Improved Uniform International Lessons for 1923 in these pages is specially adapted to young people and adults as indicated by the International Committee, but it may also be found helpful for the same lessons as prescribed for the junior and primary classes. The uniform lessons can be adapted by the teacher to the younger scholars by choosing the plainer parts and simpler truths of the Scripture text and illustrating and applying them in the class.

The graded lesson system has been adopted in many schools and has some advantages, especially in very large schools which are divided into separate departments that are really separate schools.

But the graded lessons have some serious disadvantages. The subject of the lesson is usually a topic based on a number of Scripture selections from five to fifteen or twenty in number and chosen from a number of chapters and even different books of the Bible, and thus presenting for the study of the teachers and scholars not a compact unitary portion of Scripture but a bundle of references that are not printed in the lesson help and that few will search out.

The lesson help then does not study a definite portion of Scripture but gives an expository treatment of a topic. This disadvantage is accentuated in the class where the work consists of expository lecturing rather than textual teaching.

It has been urged that the uniform lessons follow a "hop, skip and jump" method of studying the Bible, but the graded lessons usually skip about in the Bible and scatter the lesson text much more than the uniform lessons.

The graded lesson system that divides the classes into from six to fifteen or twenty different grades, each studying a different lesson and set of Scripture selections, breaks the common interest and contagion and mass movement of the school. It makes impossible the closing review that may sum up and apply the common lesson in such a telling way; puts the teachers' meeting out of business; divides the home in the study of the common lesson; and has other disadvantages.

For these reasons the majority of Sunday school workers think the uniform lessons, especially when adapted to the different ages and grades, work best in the average school and some think they work best in all schools.

## PRAYER

Father of our spirits and God of all truth and grace through Jesus Christ, we praise thee that thou hast made us in thine own image with faculties that can follow thy thoughts and hearts that can love thee. We thank thee that thou has revealed thyself to us through many voices; through the grand picture language of the natural world in which the heavens declare thy glory, and for the clearer revelation of thy truth in thy Word in which holy men spake as they were moved of thy Holy Spirit; for the voice of reason and conscience within us; and above all in these last days for the full and final revelation of the express image of thy person and the brightness of thy glory in thy Son: he that heareth him heareth thee. We praise thee for this light and love of salvation and of life more abundant. Help us to appreciate it and study it, especially in the pages of thy Word as we shall study it during this year. Shine upon these portions of thy truth by thy Holy Spirit to make them clear and luminous and open thou our eyes that we may behold wondrous things. May we read and mark and meditate upon these scenes and sayings out of thy Word so that we shall perceive their truth and absorb their spirit and be thereby strengthened and guided in thy service. May we so receive and walk in this light that we shall become children of the light. So may we grow in knowledge that we may know thee, whom to know aright is life eternal, and may our growth in grace keep pace with our growth in knowledge that we may attain unto the fulness of the stature of Christ. And may all our knowledge and grace and Christian stature be turned to service in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And this we ask in his name. Amen.

# LIST OF LESSONS FOR 1923

## FIRST QUARTER

### Jesus the World's Saviour: Studies in Luke


| Lesson | | | Page |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. | Jan. 7. | Jesus Healing on the Sabbath. Luke 13:10–17 | 1 |
| II. | Jan. 14. | Jesus Teaching Humility. Luke 14:7–14 | 8 |
| III. | Jan. 21. | The Prodigal Son. Luke 15:11–24 | 15 |
| IV. | Jan. 28. | The Rich Man and Lazarus. Luke 16:19–31 | 23 |
| V. | Feb. 4. | The Grace of Gratitude. Luke 17:11–19 | 30 |
| VI. | Feb. 11. | The Spirit of Prayer. Luke 18:1–14 | 37 |
| VII. | Feb. 18. | Jesus and Zacchaeus. Luke 19:1–10 | 44 |
| VIII. | Feb. 25. | The Parable of the Pounds. Luke 19:11–26 | 51 |
| IX. | Mar. 4. | Jesus Teaching in the Temple. Luke 20:19–26; 21:1–4 | 58 |
| X. | Mar. 11. | Jesus in Gethsemane. Luke 22:39–48, 54 | 65 |
| XI. | Mar. 18. | Jesus Crucified. Luke 23:33–46 | 72 |
| XII. | Mar. 25. | Review. Golden Text: I Tim. 1:15 | 80 |


## SECOND QUARTER

### Great Men and Women of the Bible


| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. | Apr. 1. | The Walk to Emmaus. Luke 24:13–31 | 89 |
| II. | Apr. 8. | Abraham, The Hero of Faith. Gen. 12:1–5; Heb. 11:8–10, 17–19 | 97 |
| III. | Apr. 15. | Joseph, The Preserver of his People. Gen. 45:3–15 | 104 |
| IV. | Apr. 22. | Moses: Liberator and Lawgiver. Exodus 14:10, 13–22 | 111 |
| V. | Apr. 29. | Ruth, The Faithful Daughter. Ruth 1:14–22 | 118 |
| VI. | May 6. | Samuel: Judge and Prophet. I Samuel 12:1–5, 20–25 | 125 |
| VII. | May 13. | David, The Poet-King. I Samuel 16:1–13 | 132 |
| VIII. | May 20. | Elijah, The Brave Reformer. I Kings 18:36–39 | 139 |
| IX. | May 27. | Isaiah, The Statesman-Prophet. Isaiah 6:1–8 | 146 |

| Lesson | | | Page |
|---|---|---|---|
| X. | June 3. | Jeremiah, The Prophet of Courage. Jeremiah 35:5–14, 18–19 | 153 |
| XI. | June 10. | Nehemiah, The Bold Builder. Nehemiah 4:6–15 | 160 |
| XII. | June 17. | Esther, The Patriot Queen. Esther 4:13–5:3 | 167 |
| XIII. | June 24. | Review. Golden Text: Hebrews 12:1 | 174 |


## THIRD QUARTER

### Great Men and Women of the Bible


| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. | July 1. | John the Baptist. Luke 3:3–8; 7:24–28 | 183 |
| II. | July 8. | Mary, The Mother of Jesus. Luke 2:41–52 | 191 |
| III. | July 15. | Simon Peter. Matthew 10:13–18, 21–23; John 21:15–17 | 198 |
| IV. | July 22. | John the Apostle. Luke 9:49–56; John 19:25–27, I John 4:7–8 | 205 |
| V. | July 29. | Matthew the Publican. Matthew 9:9–13; Luke 5:27–28 | 213 |
| VI. | Aug. 5. | Mary Magdalene. Luke 8:1–3; John 19:25; 20:11–18 | 221 |
| VII. | Aug. 12. | Martha and Mary. Luke 10:38–42; Mark 14:3–9 | 229 |
| VIII. | Aug. 19. | Stephen the Martyr. Acts 6:8–15; 7:54–60 | 237 |
| IX. | Aug. 26. | Barnabas the Great-Hearted. Acts 4:36–37; 11:19–30 | 245 |
| X. | Sept. 2. | Paul the Apostle. Acts 22:3, 6–10; Phil. 3:7–14 | 253 |
| XI. | Sept. 9. | John Mark. Acts 12:12, 25–13:5; 15:36–40; II Tim. 4:11 | 261 |
| XII. | Sept. 16. | Luke the Beloved Physician. Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1; 16:9–15; Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4:11 | 269 |
| XIII. | Sept. 23. | Timothy, a Good Minister of Christ Jesus. Acts 16:1–3; Phil. 2:19–22; II Timothy 1:1–6; 3:14–15 | 277 |
| XIV. | Sept. 30. | Review. Golden Text: Hebrews 12:1 | 285 |


## FOURTH QUARTER

### The Missionary Message of the Bible


| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. | Oct. 7. | Abraham, a Blessing to the Whole World. Genesis 12:1–2; 18:17–18; 22:15–18 | 295 |
| II. | Oct. 14. | Israel, a Missionary Nation. Exodus 19:1–6; Isaiah 43:9–11; 45:20–22 | 303 |

| Lesson | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| III. | Oct. 21. Israel in the Midst of the Nations. Joshua 1:1–4; Isaiah 2:2–4; 19:23–25; Ezekiel 5:5 | 310 |
| IV. | Oct. 28. Some Missionary Teachings of the Prophets. Isaiah 60:1–3; Jonah 4:10–11; Micah 4:1–3; Zephaniah, 3:9 | 318 |
| V. | Nov. 4. Worldwide Prohibition—World's Temperance Sunday. Psalm 101:5–8; Proverbs 23:29–35 | 326 |
| VI. | Nov. 11. Some Missionary Teachings of the Psalms. Psalm 67:1–7 | 333 |
| VII. | Nov. 18. Our Lord Jesus a Missionary. Matthew 9:35–38; Luke 8:1–3; John 3:16–17 | 340 |
| VIII. | Nov. 25. Christians Called to be Missionaries. John 17:18; Matthew 28:16–20; Acts 1:6–8 | 347 |
| IX. | Dec. 2. The Power of the Early Church. Acts 2:1–4, 38–42 | 355 |
| X. | Dec. 9. The Outreach of the Early Church. Acts 8:4–8, 14–17, 25 | 363 |
| XI. | Dec. 16. Worldwide Missions. Acts 16:9–15; 28:30–31; Romans 15:18–21 | 370 |
| XII. | Dec. 23. The Universal Reign of Christ—Christmas Lesson. Isaiah 11:1–10; Psalm 2:8 | 377 |
| XIII. | Dec. 30. Review. Golden Text: Psalm 145:7 | 384 |

# INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST QUARTER

Our studies for the year begin in the First Quarter with the Life of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospel of Luke.

Luke was not a disciple of Jesus, but he was an early convert who was closely associated with Paul as his traveling companion and with him came into contact with the personal disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem (Acts 21: 15-17), and thus he had access to first-hand sources of knowledge about him, and, besides, he had in hand the writings of many of these disciples (Luke 1: 1-2).

He was of Gentile birth and education and was a physician and thus he had the scientific spirit of thorough investigation and was a trained scholar and writer as compared with the other evangelists who were unlettered men.

**Yet all these men were so lifted and inspired by their association with Jesus that they wrote little books that are the most precious literary productions in all the literature of the world.**

The lessons of the Quarter touch the life of Jesus at only twelve points, but these are mountain summits that give us the trend and elevation of this wonderful Life and show us inspiring mountain views.

We see Jesus as healer and teacher and hear him uttering marvelous parables that glitter like gems on the general web of his speech. We see him going home with an unpopular and despised tax collector down in Jericho, thus outraging the deep-seated prejudices and all the finical tastes of the Pharisees, and then follow him up into the temple and see him entangling Sadducees and Scribes in the very nets in which they had sought to ensnare him. We finally enter with him on the dark pathway at the end of his ministry and follow him into the Garden of Sorrow and to the Cross of Calvary.

**It is a simple yet inspiring story, and often as we have read and studied it we wonder at every new reading of it at its infinite simplicity and beauty and pregnant application to our own life as it intimately comes home to our own business and bosoms.**

There is no danger that this Life and these Gospels will ever lose their interest and freshness through repeated study of them, any more than there is that the dew and the dawn and the majesty and mystery of the spangled midnight sky will ever grow dull and flat and stale.

We are to study these lessons that we may get new light upon them, and our study should ever be guided by the practical purpose of translating this light into stronger and richer life in the service of Christ.

SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

# THE IMPROVED UNIFORM SERIES COURSE
*for 1923*

## FIRST QUARTER

JESUS THE WORLD'S SAVIOUR: STUDIES IN LUKE
(SECOND HALF OF A SIX MONTHS' COURSE)

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## LESSON I.—JANUARY 7
### JESUS HEALING ON THE SABBATH
### Right Uses of the Lord's Day

*Golden Text: It is lawful to do well on the sabbath day.* Matt. 12: 12.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 103:1–6.

**Reference Material:** Ex. 20:8–11; Isa. 35:5, 6: 1–8; Mark 2:23–3: 5.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 13***
***Lesson Text: Luke 13:10–17***

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity
Interpreted by love.

10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.
11 ¶ And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up *herself*.
12 And when Jesus saw her, he called *her to him*, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.
13 And he laid *his* hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.
14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.
15 The LORD then answered him, and said, *Thou* hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or *his* ass from the stall, and lead *him* away to watering?
16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?
17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

## LESSON PLAN

*Introduction.*

1. ***Preaching and Practice.***
2. ***A Pious Man Talking Pompously.***
3. ***An Exposed and Convicted Hypocrite.***
4. ***Shamed Adversaries and Rejoicing Multitudes.***

The subject that brought Jesus into the most frequent and violent collision with the Jews, especially the Pharisees, was the keeping of the Sabbath. It was ordained as a day of rest and mercy, but they had turned it into a day of burdensome rites and restrictions. They had spun around it a system of complicated and petty rules that bound the day hand and foot so that all its liberty was gone and it had become a fetter if not a curse.

Incredible were many of their requirements and prohibitions. Wooden shoes must not be worn on this day, for the nails in them would be a burden and no burden must be carried. A camel-driver could not tie or untie a knot in his whip unless he could do it with one hand. It was forbidden to write two letters of the alphabet so they could be read together, unless they were traced in dust or sand so that they would quickly fade away. The whole day was so loaded down with such restrictions that it had become intolerable.

**Jesus boldly smashed through these fanatical Sabbath laws and trampled them under his feet.**

He was a great iconoclast and libertarian when it came to human restrictions. He taught the broad human principle that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and made it a day of freedom and rest and mercy. Yet he did not abolish or impair the obligation and sanctity of the Sabbath, but kept it himself and made it a means of higher and richer life.

**As the very best things may be turned to the greatest abuse, so may the ordinances of religion, such as Sabbath keeping and church going and Bible reading, be carried to extremes and made so harsh that they become repellent.**

**The means of religion should never be turned into an end in themselves and hardened into fetters that bind us, but should be a means of liberty and life. The husk should not constrict and strangle the corn.**

### *1. Preaching and Practice*

On this occasion Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath. He used the synagogue as far as he could in his ministry as there he had access to people assembled for worship. Teaching was his first business as truth is the basis of religion and preeminently of the Christian religion.

Jesus was a master Teacher as he taught with clearness and simplicity in a picturesque style, drawing homely illustrations from the life of the people and applying the truth to them in practical pungency and power.

Teaching is still the first business of the minister and teacher of the gospel, and we are following his steps in our work in the pulpit and Sunday school and should strive to imitate his methods and spirit.

At this service practice and application followed close on preaching. There was present in the audience a woman whose back was bent and bowed down with the weight of eighteen years of suffering, probably a rheumatic infirmity, so that she could not straighten up.

There are more people in every audience with backs bowed down under burdens than we see or suspect.

Physical infirmity may bend the back of the body, but there are many more invisible burdens of sin and sorrow that bow the soul low in bondage and sorrow. If all these unseen burdens and deformities were suddenly revealed to our eyes we would be astonished if not appalled at the sight.

Jesus had a sympathetic eye for burdened and bowed people and was quick to pick out this pitiful woman. He called her to him, spoke a simple word of healing, and at his touch she instantly straightened herself up with a sense of wonderful relief and freedom and then broke forth in praise to God.

It was a striking instance and proof of Christ's divine power to turn his preaching into practice and his teaching into healing. His gospel was never an abstract doctrine remote from the everyday world, but immediately fit into and took hold of human needs and straightened out crooked and deformed people into uprightness of body and righteousness of soul.

The gospel in our hands should have this same practical application and healing virtue. While we cannot work physical miracles,

yet the grace of God can banish or abate disease by its invigorating power and can unloose burdens of sin and sorrow that bend and break the backs and souls of people and can straighten them up in faith and courage and peace.

All hearers should go out of our churches and all scholars out of our Sunday schools straighter and freer than when they came in.

### *2. A Pious Man Talking Pompously*

The good deed is done, the service in the synagogue takes another turn, and we now have the privilege of hearing a pious man talking pompously. The ruler or minister of the synagogue "answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day."

We have in this speech all the marks of a partisan pleader and a pious hypocrite.

The ruler feigned indignation at the work of mercy, but the real object of his wrath was not the healing but the Healer. While seemingly afraid to attack the strange Teacher openly, he yet meant to hit him when he meanly turned upon the innocent people and beat Jesus over their backs. He affected great interest in the healing of people, but let them come for this purpose on the six work days of the week and not profane the Sabbath with such sacrilege as healing a poor suffering woman.

He thus defended the Sabbath at the expense of the sick and afflicted and made humanity fit the day and not the day help humanity; and he was hypocritical in pretending to rebuke the people when he was really censuring Jesus.

This type of hypocrisy is common enough among us.

Let a political partisan orator expatiate upon an act of the opposite party, and though the act be pure as snow, patriotic in motive and beneficent in operation, yet will he pervert its meaning and cast suspicion upon its motive and make its white look black. Let the liquor interests be attacked and the saloon be banished, and their defenders will talk loftily and even piously of the hallowed rights of personal liberty. Let "vested interests" be assailed and how sacred do they suddenly become!

This spirit may invade the field of religion and lift its head in the church. When a church becomes divided how the leaders of the opposing parties know how to raise cries of disloyalty or heresy and cast suspicion upon the orthodoxy of those who may be as true to Christian faith as Paul himself. Let poor people come into an aristocratic and exclusive church, and though they are being healed yet there may be those who will say or think, Are there not mission churches for these classes and cannot these unpleasant people go there and be healed?

**There is likely to be an old Pharisee lurking in every one of us, whether we are in the pulpit or in the pew, and we need to watch him and keep him in subjection or his tongue will get loose and utter our prejudices, whether they be political or social or religious.**

**It is easy to show the appearance of righteous indignation against others when the real object of our censure and condemnation is none other than the very spirit of Christ or even Christ himself.**

This pious ruler was defending his own position and popularity and could not tolerate a rival that exercised healing power and received popular acclamation beyond his own. This was entirely too much for his pompous dignity and vanity, and he rebuked the people in the endeavor to visit censure and judgment upon his rival.

**We also need to be on our guard against this narrow and jealous and spiteful spirit.**

### *3. An Exposed and Convicted Hypocrite*

Though the ruler of the synagogue did not dare look at Jesus, yet Jesus instantly looked at him and tore the mask off him in a scorching condemnation and convincing illustration. "Thou hypocrite," he said, calling him by his right name, "doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

The argument is from the less to the greater. If the Sabbath is made a day of mercy to a thirsty beast, how much more should it be made a minister of humanity to a suffering woman?

The pompous piety of the ruler was thus exposed as a mere sham and mask to cover his prejudice against Jesus, and he was convicted of violating the

humane practice of his own people in cruelly refusing to a woman what he granted to a beast.

Thus once again Jesus rescued the Sabbath from the absurd and inhumane restrictions of the Jews and released it into liberty and life. The day is never to be turned into an end in itself and hardened into fetters that will constrict and strangle our very life, but is always to be used as a means to larger and freer and richer life.

The Puritans went too far in harsh restrictions that took much of the joy out of the day and left us a tradition that is often quoted against them. Yet they have also been traduced as they did not go as far as they have often been charged with doing.

Our danger is not too much strictness but too much laxity in the observance of this day. It is not properly used when it is turned into pleasure and dissipation.

The fundamental principle that should regulate the use of the day is its effect upon our entire welfare, physical, mental and spiritual, and it should be so observed as to raise life at all these points to a higher level.

### *4. Shamed Adversaries and Rejoicing Multitudes*

The effect of this speech was decisive in turning the tide against the ruler and in favor of Jesus. His adversaries were ashamed, and well they might be, after this exposure of their true purpose and spirit.

Many of the arguments used against the church and the ministry and against Christianity itself are such as should make those who use them ashamed of them. In so far as these are based upon prejudice which is rooted in self-interest they are masks that when torn off leave their authors in a pitiful position.

It is easy to criticize what we do not like, and when we find ourselves disposed to pick flaws in the church or in the officers or policies of the church we should carefully scrutinize our methods and motives and see if they are free from every element of self-interest or jealousy or disappointment and are disinterested and pure. Piety is a poor cloak with which to cover pretense and pompous talk that is yet insincere.

On the other hand, "all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him." Is not this always the proper effect on the gospel when faithfully presented and fairly received? Has it not brought good news of great joy to millions of people through all these centuries? What better news could this sinful and suffering and sorrowing world receive than that of being "loosed from thine infirmity?" Burdens would then drop off its back and it could straighten itself up in uprightness and freedom of spirit.

**This would be a glorious achievement for this world that would fulfill all the visions of the prophets and all the best hopes and dreams of men. Then "all the people" would rejoice and the angels' song of peace and good will would resound throughout the world.**

**So should we hear and receive and obey this good news and it will cause us to rejoice for all the glorious things that Christ has done for us.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What were some of the Sabbath laws of the Jews and how did Jesus treat them?
2. What is the relation of the ordinances of religion to its spirit and life?
3. To what extent should we endeavor to heal or help the sick in the church and through prayer?
4. In what ways may we put on piety as a show or excuse to hide something else?
5. What are some of the true uses of the Sabbath?
6. How should we put unchristian and irreligious people to shame?

# LESSON II.—JANUARY 14

## JESUS TEACHING HUMILITY

### "Others"

*Golden Text: God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.* I Peter 5:5.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 15.

**Reference Material:** John 13: 1–7; Phil. 2:5–11.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 14.***

***Lesson Text: Luke 14:7–14.***

7 ¶ And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,
8 When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him;
9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.
10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.
11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.
12 ¶ Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.
13 But when thou makest a feast call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:
14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Jesus at a Fashionable Dinner Party.***

***2. Scandalized Pharisees.***

***3. A Point in Table Manners.***

***4. The Proper Expenditure of Wealth.***

Here we see Jesus in society. There is no recorded instance in which he declined an invitation to a feast, in which respect he stands in extreme contrast with John the Baptist who never accepted one. But Jesus was a man among men and moved in all circles and currents of human life. We find

him at a wedding feast and at a fashionable dinner party as well as at a funeral and in a chamber of sickness. He did not stand aloof from his human kind at any point, but touched them in all their relations.

**The Christian is not to be a recluse and an ascetic, but is to mingle freely with his fellow men. Society—even fashionable society—is not forbidden to him: all pure places and pleasures are his. The banqueting hall is open to him as well as the house of prayer.**

Jewish society in the days of Jesus displayed many of the traits and vices that we see in our modern society: it was ostentatious, insincere and selfish. The fine grace of hospitality was degraded into a means of vulgar display.

**Jesus moved through this tainted atmosphere and kept himself unspotted. Its evil spirit no more infected him than the murky air soils the sunbeam that shoots through it. He was in it, but not of it.**

### *1. Jesus at a Fashionable Dinner Party*

It was a leading Pharisee that was giving this social function. The Pharisees were the most bitter and dangerous enemies of Jesus, yet some of them were disposed to be fair with him, and on more than one occasion he dined with them.

The motives of the host and guests at this feast were not above suspicion, for "they were watching him." Even their hospitality was not a pure and wholesome atmosphere, full of sunshine and good will, but was tainted and poisonous.

It was the Sabbath, and the manner of observing this day was a great matter with these sticklers for petty points. They were watching to see how he would behave himself on this day in the hope that they might find some ground of accusation against him.

There was present at the feast a man who had the dropsy. Just how he happened to be there does not appear. It almost looks as though the presence of the man had been arranged by the Pharisees as a part of their plot: they were not above such things. It may have been, however, that the man had strayed into the feast himself, possibly knowing that Jesus was there and hoping for healing from him. The free access to such places in the East would permit this.

**However exclusive others may be, Jesus is always accessible, even at a fashionable dinner party.**

### *2. Scandalized Pharisees*

Among all that distinguished and fashionable company, it did not take Jesus long to pick out that dropsical man. His infirmity drew his sympathetic gaze and crowded out of his mind all the attractions of the feast.

The Pharisees were quick to note his interest in the afflicted man and thought their hour was come: they knew his disposition to heal the sick and hoped he would now fall into their hands.

Jesus caught their sinister look and proceeded cautiously. Before acting he submitted the case to their own judgment. "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" So tightly had they spun their narrow and stifling restrictions around this day, so utterly had they missed its meaning and perverted its spirit, that they had come to deny the right of healing during its hours.

They thought it the proper thing on this day to hold a feast at which they gave full play to all their vanity and selfishness, but they were shocked and scandalized at the thought that on this day a fellow man should be relieved of the heavy burden of his hopeless infirmity.

Nevertheless, when Jesus put the case before them, they held their peace. His question seems to have made them ashamed of their own heartless theory; the dignity of his person, the benevolence that beamed from his face, awed and silenced them. Then Jesus "took him, and healed him, and let him go."

The work of healing being done, Jesus continued his argument with the Pharisees. "If any one of them had an ass or an ox fallen into a well, would he not pull it out on the Sabbath'?" The peculiar Pharisaic ethics of the Sabbath permitted such help being given to a beast, and yet denied healing to a fellow man. The inconsistency and inhumanity of their position seem to have penetrated even their dull minds and deadened consciences, and again they were silent.

Thus Jesus brushed away these Pharisaic restrictions that crushed all the sweetness and light, healing and health, out of the day, and restored to it its freedom and joy.

**The ordinances of religion are appointed for the good of men and when rightly used are full of blessing. Yet their power for good is equaled by their power for evil when they are emptied of their**

meaning and mercy and turned into hard and harsh formalities.

Nothing is more heartless than religion when it loses heart and becomes a mere matter of the head.

### *3. A Point in Table Manners*

The next incident that occurred at this dinner party related to a point in table manners.

Jesus, who had not failed to see the physical infirmity of the dropsical man, was equally quick to note the moral infirmities of the guests. He observed how eager they were to choose and seize the chief seats at the table. The conceit and presumption of the Pharisees and scribes in matters of etiquette were intolerable. They were punctilious and impetuous on points of their own preferment and with shameless effrontery would push themselves into the foremost places.

We are told that "at a banquet of King Jannaeus, Rabbi Simeon ben Shetach, in spite of the presence of some great Persian satrap, had thrust himself between the king and queen, and when rebuked for his intrusion quoted, in his defence, Ecclesiasticus 15:5: 'Exalt wisdom, and she shall make thee sit among princes.'"

This unsavd and selfish strife was going on before the eyes of Jesus, and he courteously rebuked it. He softened his censure into a parable in which he told the guests that even at a wedding feast, much less therefore at an ordinary dinner party, they should not rush for the chief seats, lest they suffer the humiliation of being shown to a lower place, but that they should sit down in the lowest seat and then they would be invited to go up higher, and he then framed his advice into the great principle that "every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The root of all sin is selfishness, and Jesus detected this root blossoming out in the way men took their seats at a dinner table.

Leaves draw their sap from the heart of the tree and reveal its inmost nature, and our table manners and our talk, even every idle word we speak, come from the heart and show what we are. The disastrous that leads one to be forward and rude in seizing a lowest seat at a table or on a railway train is a leaf of that poisonous root of evil that caused the Son of God to come into the world and be crucified on the cross.

**Jesus came to redeem our whole life down to its minutest detail, so that whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do we shall glorify him. The Christian has no right to be ill-bred and selfish in manners, but should at all times and places wear the beautiful adornment of a considerate and courteous spirit.**

There is a principle of compensation at work in the world that sooner or later puts everyone in his right place. Those who rush for and crowd into the chief places generally fall in time to their own proper level; and those who are modest and humble and take lowly seats have their worth found out and are invited to go up higher.

**We should take the place that is assigned us and do our best work there, and our faithfulness will not be unobserved and forgotten, but will receive its due reward; not that we are sure to receive a higher official position or larger material gain, but that we shall have our worth appreciated and reap the inner reward of faithful service.**

### *4. The Proper Expenditure of Wealth*

A third matter that came up at this feast related to the proper expenditure of wealth.

The Jews were in the habit of making these Sabbath dinners costly affairs in which the main motives were the vanity of display and the effort to score a social triumph; and only those were invited who were of such wealth and social standing as could be expected to return the compliment with an invitation to a dinner that would be still more lavish in its luxury.

Jesus noted this selfish spirit and laid down a different principle. He advised against inviting friends and kinsmen and rich neighbors, and made a plea for showing hospitality to the poor and afflicted, promising that such a spirit would bring blessing and be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

Of course he would not be understood as discountenancing the exchange of pleasant hospitalities among friends and neighbors, but only as condemning an exclusive selfish spirit and favoring such use of one's wealth as would share its blessing with the poor and needy. As usual in the teaching of Jesus this apparently trivial point involved a great principle. These Pharisees regarded their wealth only as a means for their personal gratification and never as a means of social service.

This is a dangerous fallacy that poisons the possession of wealth at the root. Money should be spent even in personal satisfactions only in such ways as will contribute to the general good of society, and he who by his wealth entices or compels many people into making useless or harmful luxuries for himself is thereby helping to impoverish the world.

John Stuart Mill and Ruskin, the one as a scientific economist and the other as a moral economist and philanthropist, both severely condemn the expenditure of wealth that is social waste.

All wealth, however it may be privately owned, is in a degree a public trust, and should only be used in such ways as will promote public good.

This is the true principle that our multimillionaires and rich people should understand and practice, or their wealth will breed unrest and corruption and anarchy and ruin society.

There can be no doubt that the ostentatious and foolish display and expenditure of wealth on the part of very rich people has produced a vast amount of popular prejudice against wealth and wealthy classes, and this is a dangerous explosive in our modern society.

Thus Jesus invited out to a dinner party took his religion with him and there applied it to the three great ends of healing an afflicted man, of teaching humility and courtesy in manners and in all the relations of life, and of setting forth the true principle of expending wealth; and there are no lessons that our modern world more needs today.

This lesson illustrates how Jesus takes petty points and expands them into great principles. It shows how his religion was an ingrained principle and habit of his whole character and life so that wherever he was and whatever he was doing he lived it and let its blessedness and beauty shine out of him.

And it shows how his whole ministry flowed out of his heart in streams of service and beneficence upon " others," the key word of our lesson.

He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and he was always illustrating and living this principle; and happy shall we be if we also learn the secret that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. To what extent may Christians enter into society?
2. [illegible]
3. Do table manners indicate one's character?
4. What are the marks of a well-bred person?
5. [illegible] for how we spend our money as for how we get it?
6. [illegible]

# LESSON III.—JANUARY 21

## THE PRODIGAL SON

### The Reach and Power of Our Father's Love

*Golden Text:* *There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.* Luke 15:10.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 143: 1–8.

**Reference Material:** Psalm 32; Luke 7: 36–50; Rom. 5: 1–11; Gal. 6: 1–5; I Tim. 1:15–16.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 15.***

***Lesson Text: Luke 15:11–24***

11 ¶ And he said, A certain man had two sons:
12 And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth *to me*. And he divided unto them *his* living.
13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.
14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.
15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.
16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.
17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!
18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,
19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.
20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.
21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.
22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet:
23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it;* and let us eat, and be merry:
24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***
***1. Alienation.***
***2. Degeneration.***

***3. Degradation.***
***4. Reflection.***
***5. Resolution.***
***6. Reconciliation.***

The Prodigal Son is the most beautiful and most precious parable uttered by Jesus. It is a masterpiece of picturesque and dramatic description, depicting human life in its many-colored aspects, revealing the interior play of its movements and motives, and portraying the vital workings of sin and salvation. It sweeps the whole circle of theology, starting with man unfallen in his Father's house, tracing his fall through alienation and degeneration down into degradation; and his return through reflection and resolution to reconciliation, when he was once more a son in his Father's house, and the circle was complete.

**The whole parable is not simply ancient history, but is a vivid mirror of the most modern conditions.**

### *1. Alienation*

We first witness a scene of alienation. Two sons are enjoying their father's protection and love in his home. The father was equally the father of both sons, though one remained loyal to him and the other rebelled against him and wandered far. His fatherhood both antedated and outlasted his unfaithful son's rebellion, and he was still the father of the prodigal in his deepest degradation. This is the purpose and point of the parable.

**God is the Father of all men, of the wickedest sinners as well as of the purest saints. His Fatherhood is rooted back of redemption and back of the fall and had its origin when he said, " Let us make man in our image "; and it survives through all human sinfulness.**

**The father with his sons in the home pictures the ideal relation between God and his human children; a relation of care on the one side and of obedience on the other, the whole relation being suffused with love and joy.**

Into this happy home crept a devil. The younger son asked the father for his portion of the property. He made no complaint against his father, he alleged no grievance, but some fatal thought had come into his heart of

wider liberty and a better time elsewhere. The home then seemed narrow and unattractive, and the world looked free and rosy and sin tasted sweet. So the foolish boy grew alienated from his father and asked for a division of the property and a separation.

**Sin starts in wrong thoughts of God, of his law and life, and thinks it can find a better way.**

The father divided his property and gave the dissatisfied son his portion, for he could not have kept him as a loyal son in the home by force.

**God, having created us free moral beings, has endowed us with a degree of sovereignty which he cannot infringe upon and he must let us do as we will. Our substance, character and destiny are committed to our own hands. We can leave God and go away from him if we will.**

### *2. Degeneration*

Events moved swiftly, and we next witness a scene of rapid degeneration. Not many days after, the infatuated youth gathered all his possessions together and made off into a far country. Thought soon leaped into action, doubt started towards damnation.

**It is a terrible mistake to suppose that we can cherish evil thoughts in our hearts and not do evil deeds. If we doubt God we shall soon be on our way to the devil.**

He "gathered all together," for when a man starts on the road of sin he takes all that he has with him, property, habits, character and soul.

**Many a man flatters himself that he will take into the devil's country only one little portion of his substance, such as a single secret appetite, and that he will keep the rest safe in the land of good reputation, but in reality all that he has goes with him and at last shares his degradation.**

He went into a far country where he thought he would be free from all restrictions and could have the best possible time in doing as he pleased.

The fatal thought is ever being whispered into our ears that the farther we can get from God and the freer from his laws, the more liberty and life we shall enjoy.

In that far land he wasted his substance in riotous living. Life became a round of revelry and a whirl of pleasure in which his money was soon spent.

Sin wastes substance. It never creates, but only destroys. It wastes property, money and time. Vice is expensive, and the devil presents big bills. It wastes business, energy and skill. It wastes the body, poisons the blood, burns up its tissues, and rots its bones.

It cuts deeper and slashes into character, deadens conscience, and destroys the soul bit by bit. Righteous living increases substance, but riotous living wastes it and leaves a man a financial, physical and moral bankrupt.

This truth is no invention of the priest and the church; it is not taught in the Bible only: it is a law of life and is taught just as plainly and as solemnly in the daily newspaper; one may see a dozen glaring illustrations and proofs of it in any morning or evening journal.

### *3. Degradation*

Next we witness a scene of degradation. The prodigal had a good time while he moved through a many-colored maze of pleasure, but all the while he was swiftly gliding down and soon reached the bottom. "When he had spent all" was the signal of the end.

Vice rapidly runs through all that a man has. It has an insatiate greed that eats up the last dollar and the last atom of good. Then comes famine, and want begins to cry out in distress. It is the blindness of sin that it never looks ahead and considers the end thereof until it is reduced to beggary and its doom is upon it.

The prodigal was forced to do something for a bare living, and he entered into the service of a citizen of the country who sent him into his fields to feed swine. This was abhorrent work for a Jew and pictures the degrading slavery to which sin reduces its victims.

The sinful pleasures that are first sweet liberty at last become vile bondage. Wreaths of roses are transformed into coils of serpents. "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us."

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat"; this marks the lowest point of his degradation. He lived with pigs and was in no better condition than they; in some respects he was worse off.

Sin sinks the spirit in the flesh and reduces man to a beast. It turns the world into a pigsty and sends the soul to a swine-trough.

While his money lasted the prodigal had plenty of friends and all sorts of people scraped acquaintance with him and were profuse in their flatteries, but now "no man gave unto him." Everybody cut his acquaintance, and nobody would so much as recognize him or give him a crumb of bread. Friendship cemented with sin will not hold together. Evil companions at length turn against one another and have no truth or honor or mercy among themselves.

Sin is anti-social in its nature and work and at last cuts all friendly ties and reduces the evil doer to a terrible isolation in which no one cares for him.

All this descent from the comfort and joy of the home down through alienation and degeneration to degradation is not simply ancient history, but is modern experience and is a story told every-day in our newspapers.

### *4. Reflection*

We have now reached the turning-point in the prodigal's career, and it is marked by reflection. "When he came to himself" is the expressive phrase that introduces the change. The words imply that he had been away from himself, out of his right mind. The phrase is more than a figure of speech and tells the simple truth.

Sin is insanity. It puts one out of his right mind so that he sees all things in wrong proportions and relations. It perverts the judgment and throws the brain out of gear with the world.

This was the state of mind of the prodigal son in his downward course from his father's house to the pigsty. When he started out an alluring scene lay before him and he saw all things in false lights and colors. Life was to be a continual round of revelry and he saw no wrong in it and secretly laughed at his father's Pharisaic views. His father with his old-fashioned, straight-laced notions and ways stood in his path, and he did not need the old man any more!

But now his evil life had wholly changed, and the rosy hues that his imagination threw around it have all faded away and he sees its sombre shades and guilty features. He is no longer blinded to its wrongs and ruinous nature, but he sees its sin; and his soul is shocked and recoils from it as from a dreadful thing. Reflection has brought him to his senses and restored his sanity.

Famine and want have been the hard teachers that have led him to consider. The swine husks were a continual suggestion and reminder of his father's house and the plenty that was there.

**So he has got back out of that false world, which his sinful imagination pictured, into the real world. His thoughts now correspond with things; his mind fits the facts; and he has so far come to his true self, he is a sane man.**

**Reflection is always the first step in repentance, and there is always hope for a man that will stop and consider and thus come to his true self.**

### *5. Resolution*

Reflection now ripened into resolution. "I will arise and go to my father" was the determination that grew up in his heart. The root of this resolution was the sovereign "I will." His will had brought him away from his father and now his will must take him back. His father could not prevent his departure and his father could not force his return.

**God can throw many influences around us to draw us back to himself; but he cannot force us back and we never shall return until our own soul gathers itself into a determination to arise and go to him.**

The prodigal's resolution grew along the three lines of faith, penitence, and obedience. "I will go to my father" was his faith. He still recognized

his father as his father and had confidence in him. He believed in his father and was willing to trust him, and this was faith.

**Faith is the first condition of approach to God. He that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.**

"I will say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee" was his penitence. He did not come back declaring he had done no wrong and demanding all his former rights, but confessing himself unworthy to be called a son.

"Make me as one of thy hired servants" was his obedience. He did not ask for ease and abundance, but for service and for any service however hard and menial it might be.

**Such faith and penitence and obedience are always the path that leads the sinner's feet out of his degradation straight back to his Father's house.**

### *6. Reconciliation*

The final scene is one of reconciliation. The heart-broken father had never forgotten that wandering boy. Through all the years he had hoped and waited for his return. The prodigal was approaching the old home with trembling heart, wondering how he would be received. But the father was watching for him and caught the first glimpse of him while the son was yet a great way off, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

The son could not finish his penitent speech before the father had ordered out the best robe and a ring for his hand and the fatted calf for a feast, and presently the old homestead, that had so long mourned a wandering lost son, gleamed with lights and resounded with the music of minstrelsy and dance. Once more the broken home was restored and redemption was complete.

**So waits the Father for the return of his human children and such is the reception they receive. The father will never be satisfied and we shall never be saved until we are in his everlasting Arm.**

"And they began to be merry." This is the final outcome of salvation. "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore."

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Is the dissatisfaction of children with their home life a frequent dangerous condition in our day?
2. Why do many young people leave home?
3. What temptations do they run into when they leave home?
4. Describe some of the consequences of sin.
5. How can young people be drawn back to their homes?
6. What are the joys of right relations with God and right living?

# LESSON IV.—JANUARY 28

## THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

### Penalties of Selfishness

*Golden Text: Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.* I Tim. 6:17.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 37:1–9.

**Reference Material:** Psalms 49:6–20; 73; II Cor. 8:1–9:15; I Tim. 6:17–19.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 1.***

***Lesson Text: Luke 16:19-31***

19 ¶ There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:
20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,
21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.
22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;
23 And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.
24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.
25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.
26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.
27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:
28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.
29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.
30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.
31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Contrasted Lives.***

***2. Contrasted Funerals.***

***3. The Veil of Time Parted.***
***4. A Remarkable Conversation.***
***5. The Prophets a Sufficient Revelation.***

This is another great parable that was occasioned by the scoffs of the Pharisees. Many of the most beautiful things in the world grow out of ugly conditions, as the pearl is produced by the suffering of the shellfish, and some of Christ's finest parables were called forth by the jeers and stings of enemies.

In the parable of the Unjust Steward he had just thrown light on the right use of money. "And the Pharisees, who were covetous, derided him." This drew from Jesus another parable, in which the results of a worldly life are depicted in startling colors in comparison with a life of piety.

On the mighty stage of this parable are set scenes in two worlds, in each of which the extremes of character and condition are disclosed to view. In this world we see two men in the widest contrast: a rich man in luxury and a beggar in rags lying helpless at his gate.

The scene now suddenly shifts to the other world and we see these same two men in reversed positions: the earthly beggar is now enjoying heavenly felicity, and the worldly rich man is suffering torment.

The parable thus moves along two lines that cross and cut each other at the middle point. Along the one path from the highest point of temporal enjoyment the rich man descends into endless misery; and along the other path from the lowest point of earthly wretchedness the beggar ascends to the heights of heavenly bliss.

The common point where these lines intersect is death, which lies on the boundary between time and eternity. The two paths in this world converge towards this point, for here all men meet together. Beyond this point in the other world the two paths diverge until a broad and fixed gulf separates them forever.

**The parable is timeless in its essential teaching and fits our modern world as well as it fit the world in the days of Christ. It is a vivid and terrible exhibition of the psychological and social and spiritual laws that work out the penalties of selfishness.**

### *1. Contrasted Lives*

First, we see the rich man and the beggar, Dives and Lazarus. Dives lives in a palace with an outer gate that secludes him and makes access to

him difficult. He is clothed in the rarest and costliest materials; his outer robes are of royal purple and his inner garments of pure white linen, worth its weight in gold. Richest viands are his ordinary fare. Everything that appetite can crave, that imagination can fancy, that art can minister and that gold can buy, is supplied. The whole world is ransacked to gratify this man.

**This brief verse, so materialistic in its tone, that simply reflects the splendor of his worldly life, is his whole biography. There is no word or hint of service to his fellow men, of charity to the needy, and of worship to God. Nothing is said of these because there is nothing to say. This man, though guilty of no flagrant wickedness has set his heart on this world. His sin is, not that he is rich, but that he uses his riches in luxurious and elegant selfishness.**

Hard by this picture lies another of a very different aspect. Outside the rich man's gate the beggar is laid, in the hope that he may at least get some crumbs from the palace table. No hand is seen ministering to him, no word of kindness is heard, only dogs come and express their mute sympathy by licking his sores.

But this is not his whole biography, for, unlike the rich man, the beggar has a name which contains a world of meaning. Jesus calls him Lazarus, which means, "God is my help." The name is meant to be significant and through it there shines the light of a godly character. Beneath his poverty we find piety. Though poor in the bread of earth, he is yet rich in the bread of heaven.

**Such are these two lives, showing that inner character and outer condition do not always match. There is no necessary sin in riches, and no inherent virtue in poverty. Wealth is not always connected with wickedness, and we may easily have the beggar's earthly rags without having his heavenly riches. But purple robes may conceal moral ugliness, and through clean rags may shine the beauty of a pure heart.**

### *2. Contrasted Funerals*

And now these two brief but significant biographies are brought to a close. It is said of each, as sooner or later it will be said of every one, that he "died." The rich man's gold could not bribe the great enemy, nor could the beggar's suffering excite his pity.

There is, however, a difference in the manner of their deaths. Of the one it is simply said that "the beggar died." No mention is made of any funeral rites. "It came to pass," it happened one morning that his dead body was found outside the palace gate and was hurried off to a pauper's grave. The world moved on unconscious of this death.

But the rich man died "and was buried." A great funeral was held. The body was wrapped in a costly shroud, mourners were hired to weep and wail, a priest came in his flowing robes and spoke flattering words of the deceased man's success in business and high standing in the community, and a long procession wound through the streets. The whole city was in commotion over this death.

**Thus each man's death was in fit accord with his life. The beggar's life was so little involved in the affairs of earth that his departure was unnoticed, but the rich man had struck his roots so deep and wide into the world that he drew it after him to his grave.**

The narratives of these different deaths also imply different destinies. The beggar "was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom." People knew where he had gone; his piety was the prophecy of his destiny. But of the rich man it is simply said that he "was buried," and there the record stops. No one knew where he had gone, or, knowing, did not wish to say, and the priest at the funeral maintained a discreet and impressive silence on this point. So closes the record for this world.

**In these two pictures of the rich man and the beggar we may see our images reflected according as we possess the worldly spirit of the one, or the pious spirit of the other. Our lives are here put under a magnifying glass that we may see what manner of persons we are.**

### *3. The Veil of Time Parted*

The parable now parts the veil of time and discloses the vast theater of eternity. Dives and Lazarus are dead, but death does not end all, and when we get a glimpse into the other world we find them there.

The scene that opens before us is in startling contrast with the earthly scene. Beggar and rich man are now in reversed positions, the one in Abraham's bosom and the other in Hades in torment.

**Their outer coverings of circumstance have been torn off, revealing their inner character, and each has gone to his own place.**

In this world the rich man's selfishness and sin were concealed under his purple and fine linen, and the beggar's virtues were hidden under his rags; but now the rich man is stripped naked and thrust among liars and thieves, while the beggar is clothed in the beauty of holiness and is in the company of just men made perfect.

Here we behold the enigmas and riddles of providence unraveled. On earth the selfish man of sin was feasted and honored, and the poor and godly man was despised and trodden under foot; but on the other side of the veil these inequalities and injustices are leveled up and redressed, each man receiving his just reward.

Here we see whither those two lives on earth were tending. In this world they ran side by side; the beggar lay at the rich man's gate. But though apparently so near together, they were yet running in different directions and are now separated by a great and fixed gulf. Two rays issue from a point of light apparently parallel, but they are diverging beams and at length shall be separated by the distance of the stars.

**Our lives may run side by side in this world, but if there is a difference, however slight it may seem, in their direction, we shall at last be separated by the great gulf that lies between heaven and hell. There are diverging lines out of this world into the next, and if we would all go to the same place we must all get upon the same line.**

### *4. A Remarkable Conversation*

A remarkable conversation is now recorded, which need not be taken as a literal representation, but only as the necessary machinery and drapery of the parable. Dives (no longer called the "rich man," but only "he") makes a request. He scrapes acquaintance with Abraham by addressing him as "Father," and asks that Lazarus be sent to cool his tongue with one drop of water.

**The appetite that he had fed on earth had followed him and was now his punishment; his tongue that had fastidiously ministered to his delight was now his torture.**

This request throws a searchlight upon Dives and reveals him as being essentially the same man, unchanged in character and conduct. He shows no sign of penitence for his sin, and he still regards Lazarus as his servant.

**This refutes the theory that punishment of the lost will surely work their penitence and restoration. Death does not change the heart, and punishment does not necessarily produce penitence.**

Abraham, while addressing him as "son," could only fasten on him his righteous doom. He first drove into his soul the sting of memory. God need not kindle physical flames for the lost: memory will forever burn. The request was unreasonable because each in his earthly life had received the good things he had chosen, and finally it was impossible because a great impassable gulf now separated them.

**This gulf is crystallized character which hardens into final permanence. These are solemn words of warning and they cannot be erased from the Word of God.**

### *5. The Prophets a Sufficient Revelation*

The lost man, silenced on one point, now raises another. He would have Lazarus sent to his five brethren. The root of this request appears to be an indirect attempt at self-justification. The implication is that he himself had not had that clear and sufficient warning which he now desires his brethren to have.

Abraham reminded him that they had Moses and the prophets. But he replied that these were not enough, but if one were sent from the dead they would repent. He thus boldly charged that the prophets are not sufficient and demanded further testimony for his brethren.

**Herein is disclosed the cause of his own destruction, which is the deepest point of the parable. He had himself rejected Moses and set his heart on selfish indulgence. Practical unbelief had destroyed him.**

But though he was not willing to trust his brothers to Moses, yet he was willing to stake their eternal welfare on the word of a ghost.

**It is frequently the case that those who are readiest to reject inspired truth are quickest to believe ghostly visitors and spirit communications. Scepticism often runs to superstition.**

Abraham refused the request with the declaration, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

A sinful generation still seeks after a sign. Why does not some spirit come to us and assure us of the truth of the eternal world? Because such testimony would be futile, and we now have a more sure word of prophecy. It is not more evidence that we need, but more willingness to believe the evidence we have: not a better instructed mind, but a changed heart.

**The mere visitation of a ghost could not convert us. It is not spirits that we need, but the Spirit. God hath spoken to us through Moses and in these last days through his Son who rose again from the dead: if we hear not these, neither would we be persuaded though one rose from the dead.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What modern social problem is reflected in the picture of Dives and Lazarus?
2. Are conditions of wealth and poverty the main matters in our lives, and if not, why not?
3. In what ways may the selfishness of Dives be lurking in us?
4. How may we live "after the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:16)?
5. Are "spirit communications" from the other world desirable?
6. In what ways are "Moses and the prophets" sufficient for us?

# LESSON V.—FEBRUARY 4

## THE GRACE OF GRATITUDE

### The Grace of Gratitude

*Golden Text: Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.* Psalm 100:4.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 103:13–22.

**Reference Material:** I Chron. 29:10–16; Psalm 116: 12–14; Matt. 18:21–35; Phil. 4:6–7.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 17***

***Lesson Text: Luke 17:11–19***

11 ¶ And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.
12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:
13 And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.
14 And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.
15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.
16 And fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.
17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine?
18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.
19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***
***1. A Frightful Disease.***
***2. A Cry for Mercy.***
***3. The Human Part in Salvation.***
***4. Cleansed as They Went.***
***5. The Sin of Ingratitude.***

"As he went to Jerusalem": he is now going up to Jerusalem for the last time to the final tragedy. The long years of the ministry of mercy that moved through growing opposition and persecution are about to culminate on the cross. The end is drawing near and soon the cry would be uttered, "It is finished."

**But through it all Jesus was constantly dropping works of mercy along his path, and on this occasion occurred a scene that is very suggestive in its exhibitions of human nature and divine grace.**

### *1. A Frightful Disease*

"And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off." Common misery had brought these poor fellows together, and, as they were of different races and religions, had even broken down the most stubborn barriers of separation and enmity.

They stood afar off, for this was required by Levitical law (Lev. 13:46) and was a kind of quarantine to prevent the spread of the dreadful contagion. It is an interesting fact that in this particular region in Palestine where these lepers were, leprosy is still prevalent, and just such leper-bands are met by travelers today.

From the most ancient times leprosy has been regarded as a symbol of sin, and nothing else shows forth its fiery and fatal nature so vividly and terribly. "Leprosy is God's language by which he describes sin as it appears in his sight."

The disease is believed to be parasitic and is known to be contagious, and it is not simply a disease of the skin but is constitutional and circulates in the blood. Sin has come down to us in a racial stream and has infected the blood of humanity.

Leprosy is contagious, and sin is a poisonous emanation that spreads from soul to soul and breathes its foul contagion over the whole world.

Leprosy at first gives no symptom of its presence and for years may conceal its unsuspected poison, but all the while it is secretly lurking and working in the blood. How subtly can sin conceal itself in the heart of the purest babe, in the innocence of youth, and beneath the fair surface of the highest respectability and even of unblemished morality? Yet how surely is its dreadful poison there!

The last stages of leprosy are a fearful prophecy of the final consequences of sin. The body rots away joint by joint, limb by limb, presenting a spectacle from which pity would fain hide its face. "Twisted limb and crumbling stump, visages from which the gracious human lines had been obliterated by a slow, fell process more awful than the snake's fang or the lightning's stroke."

All this is only a shadow of the fearful reality of sin, a fire that burns in the bones of the body and in all the faculties of the soul, eating them away bit by bit, and that will at last end in eternal burnings.

This is not theological fiction. The hideous consequences of sin that we see on every side equal and surpass the horrors of the last stages of leprosy.

### *2. A Cry for Mercy*

"And they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." They realized their own condition and were willing to take any steps that might lead them to relief. They had doubtless heard the reports that were flying around of the wonderful cures of Jesus, and this had kindled hope in them.

When he drew dear they roused themselves to reach him. Across the great gulf, physical and moral, that separated them from him they shouted their pathetic appeal for mercy. They had faith in him as being able and willing to heal them, and they put their faith to the fullest test.

In this they illustrated the first steps in salvation. Our first need as sinners is to realize our sinfulness. While the leprosy of sin is in its incipient and quiescent stages, we are in danger of underrating its seriousness and even of deriding it. Fools mock at sin. It is an unfavorable and sometimes a fatal symptom in a disease for a patient not to feel it. Pain drives us to the physician. Sin must seize our conscience and pierce us deeply with conviction, and then there will be some hope for us.

Having realized our condition we must then have faith in Christ and call upon him for mercy. All excuses and palliations of our guilt must be cast away, and we must throw ourselves upon his grace. We have heard of his healing power, we have seen his work, and we have abundant reason for believing in him and committing ourselves to him.

### *3. The Human Part in Salvation*

Countless eyes had gazed with curious indifference or helpless pity on this roving band of lepers and nothing came of it, but "when he saw them" something was done. It means everything, when we are in trouble, to get

the right man to look upon us, and to whom shall we go in the leprosy of sin but to the Lord Jesus, for he only has words of healing and life.

**His pity is linked with power so that he can root out and destroy even the awful leprosy of sin.**

"Go shew yourselves unto the priests," was his command to them. He immediately gave them something to do, instantly divine healing wedded itself to human help, and the two wrought together.

**God is always ahead of us in salvation, and yet he goes forward only as we keep up with him.**

His grace is poured into the channel of our activity, and unless we act his grace will not flow. No one was ever saved by sitting still, and if we would be released from the leprosy of sin we must get up and go.

"Shew yourselves unto the priests," was their first duty. This was in accordance with Hebrew law (Lev. 14:1–32) in which the priest pronounced upon the cleansing of the leper and thus virtually gave him a certificate of health.

Jesus thus respected and obeyed the requirements of ceremonial law, he used existing ordinances, he kept his work inside the church. He came not to destroy but to fulfill the old Hebrew rites, and therefore he utilized them as far as he could.

**Jesus uttered the most scathing condemnation of that abuse of ordinances that turns them into an end in themselves, but he never abolished ordinances, and neither can we dispense with them. Salvation ordinarily flows in the channel of the church.**

### *4. Cleansed as They Went*

"And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed"; not before they started, nor after they got there, but as they went. Had they never begun to obey, they never would have begun to be healed, but the two things started together and obedience and blessing blended into one process. As they began to go in obedience to Jesus, Jesus began to heal them, and by the time they had reached the priests they were wholly healed, and thus service and sanctification were completed together.

This illustrates a profound principle in human life and in divine grace

The best blessings of life do not come to us before service, or after service, but in service. Wages are paid after work. Prizes are bestowed after they have been won. But these rewards are largely of an external and mechanical kind. They are generally some material thing, money or property or position, and these can be worn out or burnt up or lost.

But the best rewards of life are internal and spiritual, a part of our constitution, the development and enrichment of our own personality, and such rewards cannot be used up or filched away from us. These internal rewards grow up within us as we advance along the path of duty; our own obedience is transmuted into blessing. "In keeping of them there is great reward."

Physical health and strength, mental development, all personal improvements, come to us in this way.

**Salvation itself follows this law. It is not an external reward that is bestowed upon us after obedience, but an internal blessing that grows up in us through obedience. We are saved only as we work out our own salvation.**

How does faith in Christ cleanse us of our sin and clothe us in his righteousness? Are these blessings bestowed upon us at the end of a long line of service, as wages are paid after work? Not at all, but they grow up within us as we believe and obey.

Faith brings us into fellowship with Christ in which we are ever studying his thoughts and will, character and conduct, and cherishing them as our ideals. This roots them in our hearts and causes them to expel antagonistic thoughts and feelings.

Obedience further roots and intensifies them in our character and conduct. This process persistently practiced gradually cleanses us of the uncleanness of sin and weaves around us the robe of Christ's righteousness. Just as exercise in the gymnasium produces physical health, and study in the school produces mental development, so fellowship with Christ produces spiritual health and strength, purity and peace and power, development and enrichment of soul. As we obey we are cleansed.

**If, then, we insist on having a certain degree of faith or feeling or goodness before we begin to obey, we never shall be cleansed; but if we start just as we are, as we go we shall be healed. The trouble with many is that they want Christ to save them before they begin to obey him, whereas he will save them only as they obey.**

### *5. The Sin of Ingratitude*

Nine of the healed lepers went off to their own affairs, and only one turned back and glorified God and fell at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.

> The nine had faith enough to get something from Christ, but they did not have love enough to give something to Christ. They were concerned only with themselves and had no thankfulness or thought for him. They went off with their blessing as though they had stolen it and enjoyed a selfish salvation.
>
> There are many such selfish and mean Christians in the church today; they believe in Christ and confess his name, but they do not love him with a devotion that lays everything at his feet. Faith is incomplete and faulty until it flowers out into love and drops its finest fruits at the feet of Jesus.

And the world is full of people who take from Christ all that they can get in the way of Christian benefits, Christian institutions, home and state, Christian light and liberty, education, morality and charity, and yet give nothing to him.

> Had Christ never come into the world, where would these people be today, in what leprous heathenism would they be lying? And yet they never have returned and given thanks to him.
>
> Jesus was hurt by the failure of the nine to remember him, and he is always hurt when we fail to give him our love and praise.

It was only the one that returned who received the full blessing: "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

> It is only when we give our best to Christ that he gives his best to us. Faith gets salvation, but love gets all the fulness of God.

"And he was a Samaritan." How often are we put to shame by those that are inferior to us in birth and training and privilege? Jesus frequently scorched and burnt the self-righteous Pharisees and scribes by teaching that Samaritans and heathen, publicans and harlots, should go into the kingdom of God before unfaithful Jews, and if we are unfaithful to our privileges the same condemnation shall come upon us.

**How much healing, what countless blessings, we have received; let us turn back and glorify God and fall at Jesus' feet.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. State the points in which leprosy illustrates the nature of sin.
2. What other illustrations of sin are used in the Bible?
3. Why is penitence a condition of salvation?
4. Give some other Scripture teaching showing that we have a part in our own salvation.
5. Give some illustrations showing that obedience and blessing go together.
6. Why is ingratitude a sin, and how can we cultivate the grace of gratitude?

# LESSON VI.—FEBRUARY 11

## THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

### Prayer that God Answers

*Golden Text: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* Psalm 31:17.

**Devotional Reading:** Devotional Reading: Psalm 4:1-4, 8.

**Reference Material:** Matt. 6:5-15; Luke 15:20-24; John 4:23-24.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 18***

***Lesson Text: Luke 18:1-14***

1 And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;
2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:
3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.
4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;
5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.
6 And the LORD said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.
7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?
8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?
9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:
10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.
11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.
12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.
13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.
14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. The Unjust Judge.***

***2. The Pharisee's Proud Prayer.***

***3. The Publican's Humble Prayer.***

***4. Christ's Verdict upon the Two Prayers.***

"Men ought always to pray," is the text of this discourse on prayer. In some sense men always do pray, for the prayer instinct is a constituent element of human nature and is ever struggling for expression. It may be repressed and thwarted in individual cases, but its deep root abides and grows with the growth of humanity.

**Prayer fills a large space in the preaching and practice of Jesus. It is a faculty and privilege and power that needs to be cultivated. The parable of the Unjust Judge illustrates the power of importunity in prayer, and the parable of the Pharisee and Publican throws light upon its inner spirit.**

### *1. The Unjust Judge*

The first parable is a true Oriental picture, that of a judge godless and unscrupulous, "defying divine commands and human opinion," amenable to no law but his own arbitrary will, caring for nothing but his own interests and comfort, utterly selfish and corrupt, and a poor widow, with no money to bribe or influence to gain favor, yet being hard pressed and oppressed by some heartless creditor or other adversary.

How can this widow get the ear of the judge and get some kind of redress? Bribery or threats are the common ways of effecting such ends in the East, but this poor and frail widow could have no hope of using such means. What could she do?

She could persist in her coming to the judge and thrust herself upon him every day, she could weary and worry and pester and annoy him by her indomitable pertinacity until he would be tired and sick of her.

As a wee mite of an insect can sting and irritate and harry the greatest beast and drive it to madness, so would she bother and vex and plague that lazy corrupt judge until he would be glad to do anything to get rid of her. Day after day she would push her way through the crowd to his side with her noisy complaint and lamentation until he would attend to her case in sheer desperation simply to hush her clamant and raucous tongue.

Her importunity gained her point. He said within himself that though he didn't care a thing for either God or man, yet he would stop that woman's complaint lest she wear him out, or "give me a black eye," as the word means. "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"

What is the point of the comparison? That God is like an unjust judge in his refusal and delay in hearing petitions? Of course not. But the point is that importunity has power with him as it has with men.

God is very human, we may say, and is subject to the same motives that influence us. Importunity is an indication of the righteousness of one's cause and of the assured conviction of his heart that he will win his case if he can only get a hearing. It is an evidence of sincerity and of an earnest resolution that will persist until an answer is granted. Such importunity has power with God.

It does not mean that we are going to tease and plague God until he hears us to get rid of us, but that we are going to plead with him for his blessing until our entire sincerity and deep earnestness appeal to him.

Such importunity is often necessary in prayer, not for God's sake but for our sake: it is the condition which fits us for the blessing and draws it down upon us.

### *2. The Pharisee's Proud Prayer*

The second parable is directly addressed "unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others."

The very essence of Pharisaism is distilled into these expressive words. Trusting in self leads to self-righteousness and this leads to despising others, and such a spirit in the heart is fatal to true prayer.

We are often astonished at the boldness and merciless truth with which Jesus attacked the Pharisees, the leading churchmen and doctors of divinity of his day, and on this occasion he publicly impaled them on the sharp point of this parable.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray." Outwardly these two men were alike: they both went to the same place and for the same ostensible purpose; yet inwardly they were wide apart.

No conspicuous difference may distinguish the crowds of people that stream into the same church and sit in the same pews; to the

**human eye they all alike seem to be worshipers, yet to the divine eye, that pierces through all outer trappings into the heart and core of each one, they may differ as widely as this Pharisee and publican.**

The Pharisee is first etched before us in a picture in which every stroke tells. He "stood," placed himself ostentatiously, struck an attitude, as the word means, while another word is used to describe the standing of the publican.

**Inner spirit inevitably betrays itself in outer manner. The attitude is unessential in prayer, though a reverent spirit will always express itself in appropriate forms, but if the heart is wrong no attitude will be right.**

The Pharisee prayed "with himself." His prayer was really a soliloquy. While professing to be thanking God he was actually congratulating himself; his prayer was spun round the center of his own soul and never got out of himself.

**Self-consciousness is a fault and vice that frequently spoils our life and especially our prayers.**

The minister while making an "eloquent prayer" may really be addressing his congregation, and his petitions in some instances may even be personal allusions paying flattering compliments to and begging favors from rich parishioners, or sharp arrows of petty spite aimed at particular enemies. The father may be lecturing his children at family prayers, and there are ways in which we can all turn our prayers from God and direct them to men for personal purposes.

The Pharisee thanked God. This is a right point at which to start our prayers, for until we appreciate God's goodness in giving us that which we have we are not worthy to receive more. Yet the virtue of our thankfulness depends on its spirit and object.

**The Pharisee thanked God that he was not as other men, and rolled off a long catalogue of sinners against the dark background of which his own virtues shone out in splendid contrast.**

As he completed his list his eye fell on the publican, and nothing else could have proved such a perfect consummation of his thoughts as with haughty

scorn he uttered the words, "or even as this publican." There is a sense in which we may be thankful we are not as other men are when we realize our mercies and are smitten with a sense of unworthiness and humility. When we compare our own condition in the world with that of many others we cannot help but be thankful that God has spared us many things that others must bear.

But the Pharisee's self-righteous boasting and proud sense of superiority over others are an abomination to God and to man. Comparisons are odious, and most offensively so when they exalt ourselves over others.

**Thus the Pharisee perverted his very prayer to God to an exhibition of the sinful pride of his heart and the meanness and degradation of his own soul. We may turn prayer into pride and hypocrisy and every manner of wickedness, and if the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!**

### *3. The Publican's Humble Prayer*

In marked contrast at every point with the Pharisee stands the publican. Being a publican or tax collector, it is to be presumed that he was guilty of the unjust and fraudulent practices of his corrupt class, and it is an essential point in the parable that he was, not a good man, but a bad man. His outer life was not so correct as the Pharisee's, yet his heart was nearer right.

The Pharisee pressed as far within the sacred precincts of the temple as he dared, but the publican stood afar off, restrained by his sense of his unworthiness from drawing nigh to the holy place. He shrank even from lifting his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

**It is one of the shortest prayers in the Bible, but it is an effective prayer and availed much.**

It breaks away from all traditional forms, pious phrases and long-winded verbiage and comes right to the point. It is a plain speech and a cry of the soul. It rings with the tone of intense conviction and sincerity. It is a jet shot out of a heart full of its sin and wanting only to unburden itself before God.

Two points stand out prominent in the prayer. First, the publican's sense of sin. So far from having any sense of self-righteousness and pride,

he could think of himself only as "a sinner," or "the sinner." Any virtue of his own and all the sins of others were crowded clear out of his consciousness by the absorbing sense of his own guilt. No excuse or palliation presented itself to his mind, he was simply and purely a sinner.

The other point in his prayer is his cry for mercy. He appeals to God, who only can forgive sin, and throws himself wholly upon his grace. He feels that he can have no peace until he receives forgiveness and cleansing; nothing can be right with him until he is right with God.

**This prayer is simply the cry of a soul that lets go of itself and drops its burden of sin on the divine mercy.**

### *4. Christ's Verdict upon the Two Prayers*

We are now ready for a verdict upon these two prayers. The one prayer is longer and more elaborate than the other, and a newspaper reporter would doubtless have spoken of it as "eloquent." But a better judge gives a very different verdict.

"I tell you," is the emphatic statement with which Jesus introduces his verdict. The Lord of prayer, who is himself a hearer and answerer of prayer, is about to tell us how he judges prayer. It is as though the veil were torn asunder so that we could see how prayers are received and regarded at the throne of grace.

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." Before this revolutionary judgment the proud Pharisee, speaking great swelling words of self-congratulation, is laid low in the dust of exposure and condemnation, and the poor publican, overwhelmed with guilt and self-condemnation, is lifted up. The first is made last, and the last first.

**Man looks on the outward form and notes the correctness of the grammar and the elegance of the rhetoric, but God penetrates into the heart and looks for penitence and listens for a cry for mercy.**

The grammar may be broken, but if the spirit is broken God is well pleased: a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise. A proud heart makes us conscious of the sins of others and turns prayer into a conceited spectacular performance that is an offence to heaven, but a humble heart carries our prayer straight to the throne of grace, where it has power with God.

What a disclosure there might be if in a prayer meeting or fashionable church or stately cathedral the masks were suddenly torn off the praying and all the pious performances of the people! Many a proud Pharisee might then be revealed as well as many a penitent sinner.

We see the outward show of our worship, and it is often a beautiful sight and may be a splendid pageantry, but this may be only a sham and a pompous hypocrisy, and God looks behind the gilded pipes of the organ and beneath the silken robes of the minister and through the pious attitudes of the worshipers into the hearts of the people and judges and answers them according to the reality of their spiritual condition.

And as the large and fashionable audience streams out of the church no one can tell from the outward appearance who goes home justified and who does not: but this is all written down in the judgment books of God.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. In what ways may we manifest our importunity to God?
2. How far may we press the points of a parable in its application?
3. What was wrong with the Pharisee's prayer?
4. What are good points in the publican's prayer?
5. What are some dangers in public worship?
6. How can prayer influence God?

# LESSON VII.—FEBRUARY 18

## JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

### How Jesus Saved an Extortioner

*Golden Text: The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* Luke 19:10.

**Devotional Reading:** Devotional Reading: Psalm 24:1–5.

**Reference Material:** Prov. 3:13–18; Matt. 9:9–13; Luke 16:1–13.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 19:1–10***

***Lesson Text: Luke 19:1–10***

And *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho.
2 And, behold, *there was* a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.
3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.
4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him; for he was to pass that *way*.
5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.
6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.
7 And when they saw *it*, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.
8 And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the LORD; Behold, LORD, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold.
9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.
10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

#### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. The Burden of an Unpopular Business.***

***2. The Infirmity of Short Stature.***

***3. How Zacchaeus Found Jesus.***

***4. How Jesus Found Zacchaeus.***

Jericho means the place of fragrance, the city of aromas, deriving its beautiful name from the balsam gardens and spices that scented all the air with sweet odors. The founders of the city named it better than they knew, for Jesus perfumed it with some of the most gracious odors of his ministry.

Here he healed Bartimaeus as he sat blind and ragged by the roadside begging, and saved Zacchaeus as he sat perched in a tree.

One day there was a great sensation in the sleepy old town. Word flew around that the Nazarene Prophet would pass through. He was now everywhere famous as a mighty wonder worker and bold preacher, and it was understood that the great ecclesiastics up at Jerusalem were about to take decisive action against him. The streets were lined and thronged with sightseers waiting for his coming.

In all that multitude, possibly the two men that had the hardest lots, for whom there was the least esteem and respect, and on whom there was the slightest expectation or possibility of any blessing alighting, were Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus; yet they were to be picked men and on them the greatest blessings were to fall that day; and out of all that crowd their names are the only ones that have come down to us. The last may be first.

**Zacchaeus had obstructions in the way of his seeing Jesus. It is harder for some people to be saved than others. They differ widely in their outer circumstances and inner temperaments, and these act as helps or as hindrances to their entering the kingdom. Zacchaeus had serious disadvantages in his way, but he got in.**

### *1. The Burden of an Unpopular Business*

His first disadvantage was the burden of his unpopular business. He was a publican, or collector of the Roman taxes.

This business was unspeakably hateful to the Jews because it was a sign and form of Roman oppression and because in collecting the taxes the publicans resorted to every kind of threat and fraud to extract the last penny out of their victims. These taxes were "farmed out," the publican bidding in the taxes in his district and then squeezing all he could out of the people.

Now imagine the situation of a Jew who had been willing to engage in this business; a renegade Jew who had first become a traitor to his country and joined hands with its enemies and then had turned upon his own people to rob them. Would not all the contempt and scorn and malice of a hot blooded Oriental race be poured upon him?

This was the unhappy position of Zacchaeus. He was a chief publican, the head and front of the whole hated business. And so he was everywhere socially ostracized, there was no place for him among that people, on every

public occasion it was best for him to keep out of the way, and whatever was going on he was made to feel that he was not wanted.

Therefore when Jesus came through the town that day and the crowd was thronging around him, Zacchaeus had no chance. He was contemptuously thrust out and pushed back and told to take himself off.

**Zacchaeus' business may be taken as a type of external difficulties in the way of seeing Jesus. Circumstances sometimes seem to block up the door of the kingdom of God.**

There are businesses which no man can follow and be on the road to heaven. There are even legitimate lines of business in which it is hard to be a Christian. Evil companionships are an obvious bar to the kingdom. A low social condition, such as is found in packed tenements and dens of iniquity in great cities, makes it hard to enter.

**Thus there are outer obstructions that lie across many a man's path and seem to shut him out of the kingdom of God.**

### *2. The Infirmity of Short Stature*

The second disadvantage of Zacchaeus was an internal or personal one: he was little of stature, short, a mere mite of a man. When Jesus came through the town what chance did he have of seeing him in that pushing, surging, hostile jam? If he had been a big burly fellow he could have crowded his way through, but with his puny arms and short legs he was shut out. It must have seemed to him that the very devil was taunting him with his infirmity, saying, "Aha! you little black fragment of sin, this is no place for you: get out and stay back!" Thus the inner infirmity combined with the outer burden to keep the little renegade Jew from seeing Jesus.

**This shortness of stature may stand for any personal trait that makes it difficult to see Jesus.**

All have the same inner weakness of original sin, but in some it seems to be more quiescent, and in others more active and virulent. There are traits of disposition, such as pride, stubbornness, love of fashion and pleasure, that make it hard for one to enter the kingdom. Evil habits are chains upon the soul that one may not break with strong crying and tears.

Thus there are difficulties external and internal in the way of seeing Jesus and becoming a Christian, just as there are in the way of any good thing.

Zacchaeus' case seemed hopeless that day. With the outer burden of his unpopular business and the inner infirmity of his short stature, he appeared to have no chance of seeing the Prophet. Did he then despairingly give up and sullenly go back home? No, he came there to see Jesus and he did see him. So the little man has pluck. There is not much of him, but what there is of him is good stuff.

His difficulties could not keep him away from Jesus; and our difficulties cannot keep us out of the kingdom if we only will to go in. God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape.

### *3. How Zacchaeus Found Jesus*

How did Zacchaeus overcome these difficulties and find Jesus? "He sought to see Jesus." Probably his desire first grew out of his curiosity. He had heard of Jesus and knew that he had dared to rebuke and scorch the Pharisees, the bitterest enemies of Zacchaeus, and he longed to see such a bold man and perhaps had some dim hope of receiving good from him.

Curiosity is not a high motive, but it is a good motive if it starts us to Jesus Christ. It is the entering edge of knowledge and may be the entering edge of faith and of eternal life.

Salvation always starts in desire. No one can be saved that does not desire to be saved. It is intense desire that urges men to do great things, pierce mountains, win victories and build republics and empires, and only urgent desire can conquer sin and attain unto the victory of eternal life.

Zacchaeus now put his wits to work and began to invent expedients. If he could not get through that crowd he would try getting ahead of it. And so he ran, his legs were short but he made good use of them and what they lacked in length they made up in speed, and thus he got to a point where the way was clear between him and Jesus.

Some difficulties that lie between us and the Christian life we may not be able to break through, but we can go around them and

get ahead of them. You may not be able to destroy the bad business or bad associations you are in, but you can get out of them. You may not be able to convert evil companions, but you can withdraw from them.

Zacchaeus not only ran, but he also climbed; he pieced out the shortness of his statute by adding to it the height of that sycamore tree. He not only got away from the hostile crowd, but he got above it so that he could see over it.

To see Jesus we must get up above this earth into a higher point of view. We are too often down in a worldly crowd where we cannot see Christ.

Get up into some tree of better thought and purpose, climb the tree of penitence, get up into the loftiest branches of prayer and vision, and you shall see Jesus.

Thus Zacchaeus turned these very obstructions that kept him away from Jesus into stepping-stones to take him near. That hated Jew that had no chance in that hostile crowd, that little man of short stature that could not see anything, got the best view of Jesus that day.

So may we turn our hindrances into helps, and if we must get to Christ through obstructions and difficulties, infirmities and temptations, we may get all the closer to him.

Thus Zacchaeus found Jesus.

### *4. How Jesus Found Zacchaeus*

How, now, did Jesus find Zacchaeus? He came into Zacchaeus' town and walked down Zacchaeus' street and along to the tree where Zacchaeus sat perched, and then he looked up and the Saviour's eyes met the sinner's eyes and they were come together. Zacchaeus climbed that tree to see Jesus, and to that same tree came Jesus, we know not from how far, along what weary way, to see Zacchaeus. Long before Zacchaeus climbed that tree Jesus was on his way to see him.

The Saviour started to find us before we ever started to find him, even before the foundation of the world.

"And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him." How unexpected and startling was this address to Zacchaeus and to the multitude. Zacchaeus had no thought of being recognized or even of being seen by Jesus. The people also had no thought that Jesus would take any notice of Zacchaeus; he was the last man in their judgment that had any such chance.

But at the place where this man sat in the tree Jesus stopped and looked up and said unto him: what did he say? he did not say anything unkind to him. He made no allusion to his unpopular business or unjust practices or bad reputation.

**Not a word was said to sting and humiliate him before the crowd. But Jesus simply said: "Zacchaeus, come down, I am going home with you today."**

The effect was electrical. The people were astonished and grew critical and resentful. Many were shocked and scandalized at the dreadful turn of affairs. "Gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner," was their contemptuous judgment.

But Zacchaeus was as one in a dream. He had never heard such words before. They were the first human brotherly words spoken to him since he had taken up the unpopular business of collecting the taxes. They touched a chord in his heart that had long been silent. They made him feel that he was not an outcast and was still human.

**Jesus simply treated this lonely persecuted man as a brother.**

And it broke him all up; it melted him into instant faith and love and obedience; and he made haste and came down and received Jesus joyfully; and he renounced his sins and would replace every fraudulent tax fourfold.

**Conversion struck clear through him. Even his pocketbook did not escape.**

And Jesus went home with him, and said unto him, "This day is salvation come to this house."

**Is not this the gospel in its simplicity and beauty and saving power? Jesus came into the world, not as a hard master to con-**

demn us, but as a Brother to show us the Father and fill us with the love of God.

His invitation is, Make haste, and come down and I will abide with you. Do not stay up in that tree too long; do not take too much time in thinking over this duty and getting ready to act. Make haste, for there is need of haste. Delay is dangerous, and the Saviour is passing and may soon be gone.

Make haste and come down and go with him, and he will abide with you and this day shall salvation come to thy house.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of Jericho; when does it first appear in the Bible? what is its present condition?

2. How were the Roman taxes collected and why was the business so hateful to the Jews?

3. What are some external conditions that may make it difficult for us to be Christians?

4. Do their personal constitution and temperament make it easier for some persons to be Christians than for others?

5. What are things we should do to find our way to Christ?

6. What is Christ doing to find his way to us?

# LESSON VIII.—FEBRUARY 25

## THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

### The Fidelity that Jesus Expects

*Golden Text: He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.* Luke 16:10.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 26:1–7.

**Reference Material:** Matt. 25:14–30; I Tim. 4:13–15.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 19:11–48***
***Lesson Text: Luke 19:11–26***

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.
12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.
13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.
14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us.
15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.
16 Then came the first, saying, LORD, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.
17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.
18 And the second came, saying, LORD, thy pound hath gained five pounds.
19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.
20 And another came, saying, LORD, behold, *here is* thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:
21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.
22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:
23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?
24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give *it* to him that hath ten pounds.
25 (And they said unto him, LORD, he hath ten pounds.)
26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

### LESSON PLAN

*Introduction*

1. ***The Distribution of Gifts.***
2. ***The Rejection of the Ruler.***
3. ***Rewards for Service.***
4. ***The Unfaithful Servant.***

Jesus was at this time drawing near on his final journey to Jerusalem, and the expectation that the kingdom was about to come, always so strong among the Jews, was growing intense. This parable put the coming of the King in the indefinite future, but conspicuously emphasized present responsibilities and faithfulness.

The groundwork of the parable is framed out of the political circumstances of the time. It was common in that day for a native prince or nobleman to proceed to Rome and there, perhaps against the remonstrances of the citizens of the province, be invested with kingly authority over them; and on his return, to reward his supporters with offices and emoluments and perhaps quench the opposition of his enemies in blood.

Thus Archelaus, the son and successor of Herod the Great, had gone to Rome and, against the violent protests of the Jews who hated the whole family and very name of Herod, was made king over Judea; and on his return had placed certain of his followers in authority over cities, and others that were his enemies were put to death.

**This political history of the time, familiar to his hearers, is evidently the background on which Jesus sketched the parable of the Pounds.**

### *1. The Distribution of Gifts*

Jesus represents himself as a nobleman who is about to depart into a far country and return. He therefore calls his servants and entrusts to them certain means which they are to use in his interest, and thus prepare the way for his kingdom.

**The ten pounds in this case represent all the gifts that are bestowed upon us.**

They include spiritual blessings, the knowledge of salvation, forgiveness for sin, Bible and baptism, prayer and church; but they also include all powers and possessions and privileges, health, strength and skill of body, education of the mind, force of will, property and business, social position, influence, and every means and opportunity of doing good. However we may have inherited or acquired these, they are in the last analysis gifts bestowed upon us from God.

Each servant received one pound. The point is, not that all are equal in

their gifts, but that everyone has received something and all are equal in their responsibility.

No one is so poor in personal endowment and in privileges and opportunities that he does not have at least one pound with which to serve Christ.

Yet the gift is only one pound, for it does not take a costly outfit and large stock in trade to do business in the spiritual market.

The pounds were given, not for selfish enjoyment, not to be wasted in luxury, but that they might be used and multiplied in service. "Occupy till I come," or as the Revised Version has it, "Trade ye herewith till I come."

"This is the business of life: to traffic with bodily and mental gifts; to turn the raw fleece into fine moral fabrics and redemption raiment. The truth we have received we are not to be always questioning, but sowing to get a good stand of corn for the bread of life. Communicate your Christ-likeness, and don't let even the choicest cargo linger at your wharf longer than will serve to unpack the fragrant freight for distribution and shipment. You are a clearing house and not a bonded warehouse."

"We are not simply to talk religion, but to trade our trusts to make men rich with the barter of the skies. If a man is not a trader for Christ, he is a traitor."

### *2. The Rejection of the Ruler*

But after the nobleman's departure, his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." The Jews thus literally rejected Jesus, when they cried unto Pilate, "We have no king but Caesar," and again when they remonstrated with him, "Write not, The King of the Jews," and they have carried out this rejection to this day.

But the same message is virtually sent up to heaven against Christ by all those that do not accept and obey him as Saviour and King.

Men in their sinful blindness and waywardness do not want anyone to rule over them because they think that government by law is slavery and

that only license is liberty; whereas the truth is just the reverse of this: anarchy is the prelude to despotism, and liberty has its root in law. Russia is now bound down under despotism more galling and abject than it ever experienced under the most arbitrary and cruel Czar, because law has been replaced by personal will and chaos. Law is liberty, as the steel track is the liberty of the locomotive, and the more of the laws of life we obey the more liberty we have.

**Christ, the king, is not a tyrant ruling by despotic will and brute force, but he is the incarnation of truth, wisdom, justice, mercy and love. His commandments are the perfect laws of life in keeping of which there is life more abundant.**

The root of men's rejection of Christ's rule is that their sinful nature is out of harmony with his holy nature, in antagonism to his purity, and therefore they will not cast down every selfish impulse and evil imagination against him and come under his reasonable and righteous rule and grow into harmony and fellowship with him in which they will find their full life and liberty.

**We shall never have pure and perfect and permanent life until we make Christ king and let him reign over and in us.**

### *3. Rewards for Service*

The king, having received his kingdom, in due time returned and called his servants to account.

**Christ is already crowned King of kings in the court of heaven; he is ever returning to call his servants to account and he will finally come again at the last day and distribute eternal rewards.**

The king summoned into his presence the servants "to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading." He made no impossible or unreasonable demands of his servants, did not try to reap where he had not sown, but expected to receive only a just return upon the money he had loaned.

**Ability precedes and measures responsibility, and God expects profits only upon the capital which he has entrusted to us.**

The first servant came saying, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." This man had traded in the market of good works until his profits were ten times his capital and his investment had increased one thousand per cent. Commerce produces wealth. Dollars do not multiply as long as they are hoarded up, but remain barren and rust away; it is only as they are poured into the channels of trade and sent on errands of usefulness that they begin to grow and beget other dollars and add up into large profits.

Every just bargain pays at both ends; seller and buyer are both made richer thereby. Farmer, manufacturer, merchant and consumer are each and all profited as they keep moving their goods along the channels of trade. If all interchange of commodities and services ceased and everyone lived unto himself, the world would soon be reduced to universal poverty and helplessness. Giving is a means of more abundant getting, and a mart is a prolific mother of wealth.

**Spiritual goods obey the same law.**

Hoarded up, kept from service and for self, they lie barren and wither away; but put to service, exchanged in the social market of human helpfulness, poured into channels of spiritual commerce, they circulate around the world, they yield interest and gather profit; they increase the world's stock of truth and wisdom and righteousness, of service and sympathy and sacrifice; and they come back to us enhanced a hundred or a thousand fold.

Right thoughts and good deeds, the means and opportunities of service, need only be exchanged in the market of conduct and they will be transmuted into the fine gold and precious gems and beautiful raiment of pure and rich character.

**No other investments will yield so large profits and are so sure of their returns.**

Upon this servant the king pronounced the benediction of faithfulness and made him ruler over ten cities. Serving is a preparation for ruling. Life is full of illustrations of this law. Look into any line of business and you will find that those now at the top once began and were faithful at the bottom. Faithfulness in low things has advanced them to high things.

**So is it in spiritual service. The discipline that binds us down in faithful bondage to Christ is developing and disciplining our powers**

**into masterful self-control and strength that will at last fit us to wear a crown over a wider field and larger responsibilities in life.**

**If we let this Man reign over us, he will at last let us reign with him.**

### *4. The One Unfaithful Servant*

There was one dark exception in the line of faithful servants. He returned his pound just as he had received it, and declared that he had kept it laid up in a napkin, because he feared the king as an austere and unjust master.

**He had received the same capital and had the same opportunities of trade as the other servants, but he was unfaithful to his trust and had no profits to return.**

**It is to be feared that such unfaithful servants are more numerous than one in ten.**

Many have gifts of property and position, of learning and skill, of song and prayer, of means and privileges for service, but as far as the world and the Master are concerned they keep these tied up in the napkins of disuse and selfishness.

The unfaithful servant's excuse was false and convicted himself out of his own mouth. His own statement was his own condemnation. No witness needed to be called against him, just let him speak and he would convict himself.

**None of our excuses will stand in the day of judgment. Our own hearts know better and condemn us as we invent false pleas, and God is greater than our hearts. God will only need to turn our own words against us and we shall stand guilty.**

Retribution was visited upon the unfaithful servant by taking away his pound and giving it to him that had ten pounds, in accordance with the deep principle that unto him that hath shall be given, and from him that through his own unfaithfulness hath not shall be taken even that which he hath.

In the struggle of nature the more vigorous plant draws nourishment from the less vigorous, and the stronger animal crowds the weaker to the wall and wins in life's battle. Natural selection is ever taking from that which

hath not and giving to that which hath. The destruction of the poor is their poverty, and wealth begets wealth.

**The same law runs up through the moral world.**

Unused powers wither. Body and mind, property and position, all the possessions and privileges of life, must be kept in vigorous use and growth, or degeneration will set in. We cannot wrap these up in a napkin and keep them; when we open the napkin we shall find only moth-eaten cloth and rust. The soft white linen, in which some people daintily enfold their possessions that they may keep them for themselves, at last becomes a shroud that contains only bones. The opportunities and privileges that we fail to use to improve pass to others, and they are enlarged by what we have lost.

**Only as we use our means and powers in the great field of social service for rectitude in government, justice in business, purity in the home, faithfulness in the church and devotion to the kingdom of God in the world shall we reap immediate and far-off rewards.**

What we then send out as streams will come back to us as mist and rain to keep our lives green and our fountains full.

This principle of reward and retribution is not far away in some distant judgment day only, but it is nigh us even in our hearts and is ever enriching the faithful and impoverishing the unfaithful soul.

**Our pounds are every day adding themselves up in compound interest in service, or are withering away in wasted lives. For "unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him."**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the political background of this parable.
2. Name as many as you can of the pounds or gifts which have been entrusted to us.
3. In what ways may we manifest our unwillingness to have Christ reign over us?
4. In what ways may we use our pounds in spiritual trading?
5. How do the spiritual goods of life multiply in use?
6. What becomes of goods that are selfishly used or are unused?

# LESSON IX.—MARCH 4

## JESUS TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE

### Jesus the Fearless Teacher

*Golden Text: Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.* Luke 20:25.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 2.

**Reference Material:** Isa. 28:14–20; Matt. 7:28–29; Acts 4:7–22; Rom. 13:1–7.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 20:1–21; 38***

***Lesson Text: Luke 20:19–26; 21:1–4***

19 ¶ And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.
20 And they watched *him*, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.
21 And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person *of any*, but teachest the way of God truly:
22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?
23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?
24 Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said Caesar's.
25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.
26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.
2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.
3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:
4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Spies Sent to Catch Jesus.***

***2. A True Yet Insincere Compliment.***

***3. A Cunning Question Frankly Answered.***

***4. Jesus Watching the Treasury.***

The questions put to Jesus with a hostile purpose and his answers to them are an interesting study. These questions were often carefully and cleverly framed with the greatest ingenuity and cunning, so that it appeared that, answer them whichever way he would, Jesus would be impaled on the one or the other horn of a dilemma.

His answers were necessarily unpremeditated and extemporaneous, yet quick as a flash he made reply; and his answers always pierced through the duplicity and evil purpose of his inquisitors and sent them away discomfited and silenced. He met their clever and sinister art with art more skilful still. Often he turned their devices back upon them and hoist them with their own petard, caught them in their own trap.

Yet his answers were never mere evasions or clever tricks, but were candid and honest replies that simply told the truth. Many Pharisees and scribes, learned pundits with ponderous questions, came to Jesus thinking they had him now, and then slunk away defeated and disgraced, an object of popular ridicule.

**Jesus was gentle as a child to sincere and humble souls, but he could flash lightning against proud and conceited hypocrites. On this occasion three parties came to Jesus in succession to ensnare him, and he completely floored them all.**

### *1. Spies Sent to Catch Jesus*

"And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words." These men, who were Pharisees and Herodians as we learn from Mark (12:13), were afraid to go themselves, for "they feared the people," cowards as such men always are. And so they sent others; they got underlings to do their mean work while they themselves kept in the background.

**This sneaking way of attacking others is still practiced among men, even in the church. Many a man, or woman, too cowardly to come out into the open with charges, will yet find a way of sending some one else to start rumors and sow suspicion and breed trouble.**

Pharisees and Herodians were bitter enemies, as the one party opposed and the other supported the Roman rule, but they were made friends together in their common opposition to Jesus.

These emissaries were "spies, which feigned themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words." They pretended to be humble and sincere souls in search of light in their honest perplexity, whereas they were masked enemies seeking to do Jesus harm.

The value of a question depends largely on the motive of the questioner. A sincere question indicates an honest state of mind that is itself a condition and means of receiving truth; upon such a soul the light is sure to dawn. But an insincere captious question, that is intended only to catch another or to entangle the subject in controversy, is born of a state of darkness that will shut out the truth.

In nothing else is sincerity of motive so important as in religion. If we ask religious questions to catch others we shall get caught ourselves.

We may assume a mask of feigned sincerity and even of piety when our real motive and purpose is to do evil.

### *2. A True Yet Insincere Compliment*

These Pharisees and Herodians approached Jesus with a carefully prepared introduction to their question that sounded highly complimentary. "Master," they said, "we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly."

Could any introductory address be more laudatory? They certify to the truthfulness of Jesus, that he knows the truth and speaks only the truth, so that in him there is no suspicion or shadow of falsity. To this spirit of truthfulness they also add the great virtue of courage, for he cares not for any one or for any consequences, but will speak the truth in the face of Cæsar himself. They also bear witness to his fearless impartiality, as he will not regard the person of men, and can be depended on to teach the way of God.

All this characterization was and is true, fitting Jesus to the letter.

Yet it is also true that these enemies did not believe a word of all this and were uttering insincere compliments only as a part of their trap to catch Jesus. But some of the truest and finest things ever said of Christ have been uttered by his enemies who spoke better than they knew. These hypo-

crites thought that by thus flattering Jesus they would lure him into confidence in them and lull him into a state of self-satisfaction in which he would be off his guard and easily fall into their snare.

**They praised him to his face but only that they stab him in his back. This art has not been lost, and Christ is often still spoken of in the most flattering way by those who reject him and wound him to the heart.**

### *3. A Cunning Question Frankly Answered*

They were now ready with their question: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or no? " We must admire the apparent frankness and reasonableness of the question in spite of the concealed deadly trap it contained. It seemed perfectly legitimate and innocent, and yet it was a crafty snare and they felt sure it would catch Jesus.

It grew, of course, out of the political situation. Rome ruled Judea with a mailed fist and ruthlessly put down any restlessness in blood. The Jews, a proud and patriotic people who believed themselves a chosen nation with the right to rule over all the world, were chafing under this yoke and were continually plotting and at times breaking out into rebellion against it.

So it seemed that Jesus would impale himself on one horn of this question whichever way he answered it. If he said the Jews should not pay the Roman tax he would be guilty of treason and bring down the Roman hand upon him. If he said the Jews should pay this hated tax he would be regarded as having turned traitor to his own country and would infuriate the Jews against himself. "Shall we give, or shall we not give? " they demanded: "yes " or "no."

**But some questions cannot be answered by a simple yes or no, and this was one of them.**

Jesus overlooked their demand for such an answer and quietly called for a Roman penny. "And they brought it," as we read in Mark, little thinking they were bringing the very witness that was to refute and silence them. "Whose image and superscription hath it? " he innocently asked. "Caesar's," they could not do otherwise than answer. Then said Jesus, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's."

"And they marveled at his answer, and held their peace." And well they might marvel. Their question was fully and frankly answered. Jesus was free of all offense to either Roman or Jew, and they themselves were caught in their own net. By the fact of their using Caesar's coin they so far acknowledged Caesar's government. They accepted the benefits of Roman law and order, protection and safety, Roman roads and Roman rights: was it not just that they should pay for these things?

This was the meaning and purpose of the taxes they paid, and they themselves unwittingly admitted the justice of such tax by the very coins they used. This principle held good, even though the Roman power was an usurpation which they had a right to throw off if they could. The Roman rule was the *de facto* government, and as such it should be obeyed.

On the other hand, God also had rights which should be fulfilled. Their own souls were stamped with the divine image and bore witness to his right to reign over them. They should render unto him the faith and service that were his due.

**Thus duty to man and duty to God were both recognized and enforced.**

These two duties are still binding on us. The powers that be are still ordained of God, however much they may have changed their form. We owe our government tribute and obedience and respect; and we also owe the same duties unto God.

**These two sets of duties do not conflict, but combine and blend into one spirit and service.**

And they "held their peace." The dialectic of the Master outwitted and defeated their clever device, and they retired.

Pharisees and Herodians having been driven from the field, the Sadducees next tried their hand (verses 27–40). They had a question that was fearfully and wonderfully made, relating to their marriage customs. It was intended to embarrass Jesus on the subject of the resurrection and they thought it would either force him to deny the resurrection as they did, or else drive him into admitting a ridiculous conclusion.

But again Jesus deftly extricated himself from their trap and drove them into confusion and silence. He convicted them of ignorance of their own Scriptures, and they quickly disappeared from the scene.

Ignorance of Scripture in its broad and deep spiritual meaning is one cause of our trouble as we misunderstand Christ and his kingdom and refuse or fail to be loyal to him.

### *4. Jesus Watching the Treasury*

The scene now shifts and we see Jesus sitting over against the treasury in the temple watching how the people cast in their money.

Jesus was not so unworldly that he had no interest in money matters, but he noted how people gave as one vital aspect of their life. He still sits over against every treasury and counts every dollar in it.

He notes how money goes into it and how it comes out; how people earn it, and then how they spend it. Any dishonest gaining of wealth or selfish or unworthy spending of it, however deftly it may be concealed from men, is all open to him. No juggling of the books can deceive him, and the value of every piece of security is accurately known to him.

If we did but realize how all our money transactions are done under the eye of God would we not be more honest and careful?

Into this temple treasury the rich cast in much, and a poor widow cast in two mites, let us say two cents, though the mites were worth only about one-eighth of a cent each. Yet Jesus said the widow cast in more than all others, because they cast in out of their abundance, but she cast in her whole living.

So our giving is to be measured not only or even mainly by what we give, but by what we have left.

Judged by this standard many of the poor today give more than the rich and receive a greater commendation from God.

This treasury scene brings our giving and our whole business into the presence of Jesus Christ and bids us do all things under his eye so as to win his approval and blessing. Such a way of doing business would revolutionize the financial world and would fill

**all our church treasuries and send the gospel in broad streams out over the world.**

We commonly think of giving as a duty, that which is due or owed, and this carries with it all the unpleasant implications of a debt. But we should rise far above this conception and view giving, not simply as a duty and debt, but as a privilege and delight.

The Hebrew worshippers blew their silver trumpets as the smoke of their offerings rose from the altar, expressive of the gladness with which they rendered this sacrifice and service; and we, having passed into the larger dispensation of the Spirit, should worship God with our offerings with even greater joy.

That we by our gifts can give wings to the gospel and send it over the world, that our money is an arm and hand by which we can reach around the globe and touch and bless every human being, is a splendid power and privilege that we should appreciate and that should cause us to blow our most jubilant trumpet notes.

**This power immensely widens our sphere of service and makes us benefactors of the world; it enables us to do the greater works Jesus promised us we could do; and it broadens and enriches our life and hides it more deeply with Christ in God. We should leap at such a privilege and find its duty a great delight.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the attempts of his enemies to entrap Jesus.
2. In what ways may men still feign themselves to be good in order that they may do evil?
3. How may we compliment Christ and yet be disloyal to him?
4. Why should we pay taxes?
5. What is the relation of good citizenship to Christian life?
6. Why is giving a Christian duty and how may we make it a delight?

# LESSON X.—MARCH 11

## JESUS IN GETHSEMANE

### How to Stand the Hardest Test

*Golden Text: Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for unjust, that he might bring us to God.* I Peter 3:18.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 22: 1–8.

**Reference Material:** Matt. 4:1–11; 26:36–46; I Cor. 10:13; Heb. 4:15–16; James 1:2–6.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 22***

***Lesson Text: Luke 22:39–48, 54***

39 ¶ And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.
40 And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.
41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed,
42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.
43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.
44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.
45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,
46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.
47 ¶ And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.
48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

54 ¶ Then took they him, and led *him*, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

1. ***Gethsemane.***
2. ***The Support of Human Sympathy.***
3. ***Exceeding Sorrow.***
4. ***A Marvelous Prayer.***
5. ***The Hour of Betrayal at Hand.***

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent;
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives were not blind to him,
The little gray leaves were kind to him,
The thorn-tree had a mind to him,
When into the woods he came.
—Sidney Lanier.

After the closing hymn of the Lord's Supper, Jesus and the disciples near the hour of midnight went out of the city across the Kedron to the garden of Gethsemane on the western slope of the Mount of Olives.

**This garden was the real battlefield of the Cross. Gethsemane won the victory of Calvary.**

Out of this agony Jesus stepped calm and strong for the final hour. We must win our battles before we come to them in secret prayer and gathered strength.

### *1. Gethsemane*

They came to Gethsemane. The name means "the oil press," and was an orchard of olive trees such as is found there today. It was a place of frequent resort with Jesus and his disciples (John 18:2), and may have belonged to some friend.

**The name is deeply significant and always touches a chord of sorrow in our hearts.**

At the entrance to the garden Jesus left eight of his disciples and went on with the other three to engage in prayer.

**Prayer was his preparation for his passion.**

He wanted to see full and clear the light of his Father's face before he stepped into the final darkness. He sought to harmonize his will into perfect unison with the Father's will and feel the assuring sustaining presence and power of his omnipotence: he knew that he could then bear the cross.

**Prayer is the highest preparation for every burden and battle. It quiets the soul and clears its vision so that it can see the path of truth and duty.**

It is when the lake lies perfectly still that it reflects heaven's blue; it is when the soul lies still before God in communion with him that it catches and reflects his mind. Prayer presses into the secret place of the Most High and there makes discoveries no penetration of reason could ever find; there also it gathers strength for service and sacrifice; it lays hold of God and then is ready to lay hold of any work and bear the strain of any burden.

**In entering any Gethsemane, let us go in through the gate of prayer, and then we can endure the agony and come out calm and strong for the cross.**

### *2. The support of Human Sympathy*

And he taketh with him Peter and James and John (Mark 14:33). The three witnesses of the glory of the Transfiguration were also witnesses of the agony of Gethsemane. They saw Jesus on the mountain top steeped in splendor and they saw him down in the dusk of the garden bowed under bloody sweat and sorrow: by such scenes were they fitted to be witnesses for him.

It was James and John who, in asking to sit on the throne with Jesus, had said that they were able to drink of the same cup that he would drink (Matt. 20:22). Here they saw what that cup was, and they did drink of it, as every disciple must.

Why did Jesus, leaving the other eight disciples behind, take these three with him? Partly as an inner guard against interruption, but mainly for the sympathy and support of their presence. They were the inner circle of disciples that understood him best and that he trusted most.

**It was a beautiful and pathetic exhibition of the humanity of Jesus that in his hour of trial he wanted his dearest friends near by. Their simple presence helped to support and comfort him; their shoulders were under his burden; he was so much stronger by reason of their added strength.**

Sympathy is a wonderful power to lighten a burden. Solitary suffering is doubly hard to bear. It gives us a sense of unsupported and forsaken

loneliness that kills courage and fills us with despair. The mere presence of a friend rallies our energies and inspires us with new hope and strength.

**There are many lonely burdened hearts in the great Gethsemane of this world, and, as opportunity offers, we ought to support and comfort them.**

It was the simple silent presence of these chosen disciples that Jesus wanted: not their talk. The babble of speech is often an impertinence in sorrow. These friends were near Jesus in his sorrow, but they were still separated from him by a wide spiritual interval. At last he had to tread the wine-press alone.

**We can go with others part way in their sorrow, but there is a point beyond which we cannot go, they are still separated from us, and every one must bear his own burden.**

### *3. Exceeding Sorrow*

When Jesus and the three disciples were buried deep in the seclusion and shadows of the garden a mysterious dread as the horror of a great darkness came upon him. He was "in an agony" and "began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy, and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death" (Mark. 14:33–34).

What was this terrible storm that broke upon the sinless Christ? "It was," says Farrar in his *Life of Christ*, "something far deadlier than death. It was the burden and the mystery of the world's sin which lay heavy on his heart; it was the tasting, in the divine humanity of a sinless life, the bitter cup which sin had poisoned; it was the bowing of Godhead to endure a stroke to which man's apostasy had lent such frightful possibilities. It was the sense, too, of how virulent, how frightful, must have been the force of evil in the universe of God which could render necessary so infinite a sacrifice. It was the endurance, by the perfectly guiltless, of the worst malice which human hatred could devise; it was to experience in the bosom of perfect innocence and perfect love, all that was detestable in human ingratitude, all that was pestilent in human hypocrisy, all that was cruel in human rage. It was to brave the last triumph of Satanic spite and fury, uniting against his lonely head all the flaming arrows of Jewish falsity and heathen corruption—the concentrated wrath of the rich and respectable, and the yelow

fury of the blind and brutal mob. It was to feel that his own, to whom he came, loved darkness rather than light—that the race of the chosen people could be wholly absorbed in one insane repulsion against infinite goodness and purity and love."

**We cannot enter into all the bitter and fiery ingredients of this anguish, for it involves roots and relations that stretch infinitely beyond our understanding and experience; it is a burden and weight of mystery of which our minds can only touch the edge. Its deepest meaning was that "the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all."**

**This was the agony that forced from the sensitive quivering frame of Jesus great drops of blood and a great cry of sorrow out of his heart. This was the unspeakable cost of our redemption.**

### *4. A Marvelous Prayer*

Out of this garden has floated one of the most wonderful prayers in the Word of God; out of this darkness and agony came strong trust and sweet submission. Again following Mark's version we hear Jesus say, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."

"Abba," the Aramaic word for Father, is one of the very few literal words of Jesus that have come down to us, so that in this word we hear the very sound of his voice.

**"Father" must ever be the first word of our prayer; we cannot pray unto an "Unknowable Power."**

"All things are possible unto thee" is the strong ground of confidence prayer first stands upon. Prayer has no meaning unless it puts God on the throne and all things in his hand. If his power and providence were limited, he would be impotent to respond to our appeals. Faith asserts the sovereignty of God and commits all things to him.

"Remove this cup from me": what a pathetic cry is this; how human it is! The cup of the cross was already becoming so bitter that Jesus instinctively prayed that it might pass from his lips.

**The humanity of the Son of God is here laid bare down to his shrinking, quivering nerves.**

As he looked full at the cross, for a moment his courage wavered and his faith paused. This was not human sinfulness, but only that human shrinking which is one of the necessary safeguards of our life. It is right for us to pray that the cup of trouble may pass. All the saints have cried to God in their Gethsemane, "Deliver me out of all tribulation."

"Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." This was the strong sure check that Jesus put upon his own will, the invulnerable safeguard that he threw around himself against unholy desires and ignorant petitions, the mighty rock on which he kneeled.

**The universal condition of all our prayers, either expressed or implied, is, "Thy will be done."**

We are not wise enough at our best moments to know what is best for us and consistent with the omniscient wisdom and purpose of God. The little child would quickly injure and even destroy itself if it could have its own wish and way, and not less foolish and disastrous would it be for us if we could dictate to God just what he should give us and do for us.

**It is right for us to let our hearts speak out their desires, but then we should quickly commit our way unto him and let him decide what he should bring to pass.**

### *5. The Hour of Betrayal at Hand*

Three times he returned to the disciples and found them sleeping. He seems to have been so dependent on their sympathy and support that he wanted to assure himself of their presence and watchfulness. On their part, the lateness of the hour, the darkness and silence of the place, the excitement and anxiety through which they had been passing, the great benumbing grief that was upon them, the drowsiness of sorrow, all combined to overpower them with slumber. It was a human weakness which Jesus excused. "The spirit is willing," he said, "but the flesh is weak."

Yet they were in some degree blameworthy, and Jesus singled out Peter for a gentle rebuke. Their love for him and his dependence on them ought to have kept them awake.

**There are times when nothing can excuse unfaithfulness. The soldier on picket duty must not sleep a moment, or he will answer**

for his lapse with his life. The Christian is always on duty for his Master, watching for him, and never should he fail to give him his full support.

Returning the third time, Jesus spoke in calm tones, "The hour is come." The victory was won. Through prayer his will had been wrought into absolute unquestioning coincidence with the will of the Father, the peace of God was upon him, the strength of God was in him, and he was now ready to be offered.

"Rise up, let us go," he said; "lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand." Even while he spoke the multitude led by Judas appeared at the gate, and Jesus calmly went out to meet them. The false kiss was given by the base betrayer, and it drew from Jesus the pathetic appeal, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" It would seem that such an appeal must have smitten the soul of Judas to the heart.

That was not the last false kiss that Jesus Christ has received! He is still often hypocritically kissed by professed friends and even within the circle of his own church.

Whoever professes the name and faith and wears the livery of the Christian life and yet proves false to the teaching and fellowship of Christ in his conduct and character is verily imprinting a false kiss on his very lips.

We may well examine ourselves at this point and inquire, "Lord, is it I?"

### Suggestive Question and Topics

1. Give some account of the location and meaning of Gethsemane.
2. How may prayer prepare us for the duties and crises of life?
3. How does human sympathy support us in trial?
4. What was the meaning of Christ's exceeding sorrow in the garden?
5. What is wonderful about Christ's prayer in Gethsemane?
6. In what ways may we betray Christ even with a kiss?

# LESSON XI.—MARCH 18

## JESUS CRUCIFIED

### What Our Salvation Cost

*Golden Text: He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.* Isaiah 53:5.

**Devotional Reading:** Isaiah 53:3-11.

**Reference Material:** Psalm 22:1-21; Mark 15:22-41; John 19: 16-30; I Cor. 1-23-24; Gal. 6:14.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 23***

***Lesson Text: Luke 23:33-46***

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.
34 ¶ Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.
35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.
36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,
37 And saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.
38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
39 ¶ And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.
40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?
41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.
42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.
43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.
44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.
45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.
46 ¶ And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. The Cross.***

***2. The Gambling Soldiers.***

***3. The Inscription.***
***4. An Unconscious Eulogy.***
***5. The Final Scene.***

Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in.

The world has many battlefields, some of which mark supreme struggles and crises in history and draw visitors from all lands, but this "green hill" without the city wall so far away was indeed the scene of the greatest battle and tragedy of all time, and from it flow streams of liberty and life for all the world.

From Pilate's hall Jesus was led away to the place of crucifixion. He was made to carry his own cross, but on the way an African Jew was compelled to share the burden. A company of women followed him, bewailing his fate, but Jesus bade them weep not for him, but for themselves.

**In all that throng he was the one man who did not need to weep.**

At last the procession reached the place where the great tragedy was enacted.

**Here we have come to the loftiest summit in the story of redemption.**

Towards this point for centuries the lines of prophecy and providence converged, and from it ever since have issued rivers of blessing that are everywhere making the world rejoice and blossom as the rose.

The name of the place was Golgotha in Hebrew, Calvary in Latin. It was outside the north wall of the city on the Damascus road. The name, meaning a skull, was probably given to a small knoll in the shape of a skull and it was a significant name for the place of man's redemption.

**How eloquent of death is a skull!**

The delicate organs of sight and sound and speech that were so expressive of life are utterly gone, leaving only dark caverns staring blankly around; and the great golden bowl of the brain, once the seat of intelligence and affection and will, is empty forever. So is man in his sin.

**It was fitting, then, that the cross should be lifted at Golgotha, the place of a skull, for it was to bear the guilt of sin and undo all its work.**

**On that cross were to be nailed all the wounds and woes that have reduced man to a skull, and from it were to issue such virtue and power as would restore his shattered faculties and make him once more a living soul.**

### *1. The Cross*

The soldiers that led Jesus to the place of crucifixion promptly dispatched the business.

The mode of Christ's death had been shadowed forth under a variety of types and figures. The brazen serpent signified that he was to be lifted up; the lamb upon the altar showed that his blood must be shed. His hands and his feet were to be pierced, he was to be wounded and tormented, his ears were to be filled with revilings, upon his vesture lots were to be cast, and vinegar was to be given him to drink. These numerous and diverse requirements as to the Messiah's death had been foretold in Jewish prophecy.

And now the Gentile world came forward with a mode of death that marvelously combined them all. An instrument of execution had been invented by the cruelty of the human heart that was the terror of the ancient world. This was the cross. It was only two beams of wood nailed together at right angles, but it was armed with almost preternatural power of inflicting suffering.

The victim was first stripped quite naked and scourged with whips, into which had been woven bits of iron, until his flesh was all lacerated and bleeding. He was then laid upon the cross, his arms stretched out upon the cross beam, and large iron spikes ruthlessly driven through hands and feet into the solid wood behind.

The cross, bearing its victim, was then raised upright and dropped into the hole dug for it with a violent jolt. Hanging on four great wounds, naked under a blazing sun, torn and bleeding, with wounds inflaming, fiery thirst raging, every nerve quivering with pain, the sufferer endured the mortal agony for one, two, or even three days before death mercifully put an end to the scene.

And through it all the soldiers and the rabble mocked and jeered and tormented the wretched creature, even spitting upon him and brutally striking him as they passed by.

This is what they did when " they crucified him." There by the holy city at the place of the skull, surrounded by enemies, cruelly tormented, with only a few women and a single disciple looking on from a distance in silent sympathy, Jesus hung upon the cross.

All the horror of this death burst upon him in flames of agony so fierce and terrible that in a few hours his life was consumed.

Yet no spot of guilt was upon him, no secret fault was in him, but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.

### *2. The Gambling Soldiers*

The soldiers in charge of the crucifixion received the garments of Jesus as their perquisites. Wholly unconscious that they were fulfilling ancient Jewish prophecy (Ps. 22:18), they divided the outer garments into four parts, one for each soldier; and then, rattling dice in their brass helmets, they gambled for the inner garment which was woven without seam.

Thus unwittingly do men even in their deepest wickedness fulfill far-off divine purposes.

How little did these soldiers realize the overshadowing significance of that death while they were busy getting a few shreds of this world's goods? Their eyes glittered with avarice as they watched the fall of the dice, but they were blind to the innocence and meekness and self-sacrifice of the Man on the cross. Their tongues were noisy with bargaining and with blasphemy, but they had no words of sympathy and praise for the strange Sufferer.

It is not even so among us today? In all our cities and towns in the very thick of their crowded streets and marts, churches and cathedrals lift their spires to heaven often crowned with a gilded cross; within sight of this symbol of the crucified Christ men buy and sell and speculate and gamble and follow with the fiercest competition the pursuit of this world's goods; how often do they lift their eyes to that symbol and temper their bargaining and restrain their blaspheming with thoughts of that holy Man?

How much of our living is but noisy worldliness and selfishness in the presence of Christ? Let the shadow of that cross ever fall upon our lives to quiet and restrain them into holy praise and high endeavor.

### *3. An Unconscious Eulogy*

A furious mob raged like an angry sea around the cross. There were the preachers and elders of the church, Pharisees in their ostentatious piety, Sadducees in their silken robes, Roman soldiers in their scarlet cloaks, coarse people drawn by low curiosity, and the basest dregs from the slums of the city. These kept up a constant uproar of jeers and taunts and insults and violence against Jesus.

**And in the midst of it all what was he doing? Praying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do": the sublimest prayer in the Bible and in all the literature of the world.**

As an old violin, that has long been under the magic touch of a master so that its pores are full of the music of all the melodies that have ever kindled and faded on its strings, can give forth no discordant sounds but however rudely it may be played or roughly it may be handled yields only deep mellow notes, so Jesus was so full of the music of God that even on the cross under the maltreatment of his enemies he could utter no vindictive or bitter words, but calmly prayed for his tormentors.

**Greater patience and forgiveness and love God himself cannot have.**

A few of the taunts out of that ungodly crowd were caught up into the inspired Gospels and have come down to us. Like everything that was said in derision against Jesus, they add to his honor and are so many crowns unwittingly placed upon his head.

"He saved others," they jeeringly exclaimed and doubtless thought it a famous jest.

**But no grander eulogy could be pronounced even upon the Son of God. Unconsciously they placed upon his brow his brightest crown.**

"He saved others": this he did whether they meant it in truth or in mockery. Many that had been healed of disease, many that had been forgiven of sin, many that had been comforted in sorrow, could have testified that "he saved others." An increasing multitude down through the cen-

turies, the millions that have felt his healing power in the world today, and all the countless redeemed in heaven stand ready to bear witness to this blessed truth.

"Let him save himself, if he be the Christ, the chosen of God." They taunted him with impotency. But their saying was not true in the sense they meant. He could have saved his life as far as mere power was concerned; one flash of his omnipotence would have laid his enemies low. But in a deeper sense their saying was true.

**Jesus could not save himself at the expense of his devotion to the Father and of his love to a lost world. No imagination can picture the consequences if on that eventful day Jesus had simply saved himself.**

### *4. The Inscription*

On the top of the cross over the head of Jesus was a board whitened with gypsum bearing in black letters the inscription, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Pilate wrote the inscription, doubtless as a deadly insult to the Jews, and when they saw it they were enraged and interceded with him to have him change it. But the Roman governor, having recovered some of his courage, met them with the refusal, "What I have written, I have written." Pilate wrote better than he knew. He may have had some dim consciousness of the moral greatness, if not of the supernatural character, of Jesus and thus wrote.

**More likely, however, it was written as a jest and insult; yet, like many another word spoken in ridicule, it has turned out to be one of the great truths of the world.**

It was written in three languages: in the official Latin, the current Greek, and the vernacular Aramaic—a fact which may explain the variations in its form in the gospels. Everyone present could understand one or the other of these languages.

**The gospel is for all men of every race and tongue and nation, and it must be put into all languages that all may hear it and none may miss its good news.**

The Latin was representative of power in the ancient world, the Greek of culture, and the Aramaic of the common people.

Christ is king over all; he is mighty to rule over the strong; he has truth for the intellectual; and his sympathies are as broad as humanity, and the common people hear him gladly.

### *5. The Final Scene*

Passing by the deeply significant incident of the two thieves, we come to the final scene. Nature manifested mysterious sympathy with the Sufferer. The sun hid its glories from the awful spectacle and the earth quaked as though convulsed with mortal agony. These strange phenomena set the cross in a grand cosmic framework and disclosed its universal relations.

The outer darkness, however, was but a shadow of the deeper night that was gathering around the soul of Jesus.

We cannot penetrate into the mystery of the profound moment when the Father's face was averted and the Son uttered the intensely pathetic cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This gives us a faint hint of the cost of redemption.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon and life was about spent. Human nerves could endure the strain of suffering no more. The last thread was about to snap. With a great cry of mortal agony he commended his spirit to his Father, his head fell forward and he was still. Life had fled and he was dead. With wicked hands they had crucified him.

Only in the presence of this cross can we know man: how deep is his sin and how great is his guilt. Only in the presence of this cross can we know God: how inexorable is his justice and how infinite is his love.

The love of God in Christ, the worth of man, the sinfulness of earth and the holiness of heaven, all these were gloriously manifested when, on that green hill far away, the dear Lord was crucified.

#### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Describe Calvary and give the significance of the name.
2. Give a description of the cross as an instrument of execution.

3. In what ways may we be as thoughtless of the cross of Christ as the gambling soldiers?
4. Give some other unconscious eulogies that were pronounced on Jesus.
5. In what ways is the inscription on the cross being fulfilled?
6. Why did Jesus die on the cross?

# LESSON XII.—MARCH 25

## REVIEW: JESUS THE WORLD'S SAVIOUR

### Luke's Picture of Jesus

*Golden Text: This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* I Tim. 1:15.

**Devotional Reading:** Rev. 7:9–17.

LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***
***1. Jesus as a Healer.***
***2. Jesus as a Teacher.***
***3. Jesus as the Revealer of the Father.***
***4. Jesus and Social Problems.***
***5. Jesus as a Sufferer.***
***6. Jesus as a Dying Saviour.***

Our studies in this Quarter have extended from the healing of the woman in the synagogue in Perea in the closing period of his ministry to its end on the cross.

We have in these lessons abundant materials with which to paint a picture of Jesus.

#### *1. Jesus as a Healer*

Jesus stands forth in his ministry preeminently as a healer. He did not come into the world as a conqueror to trample it under the tread of an army, as many empire-builders have done. No human being ever received an injury at his hands, but many felt his healing touch and were made whole. Blind eyes were opened to the light of the wondrous world, lame feet were made strong, and bent backs were straightened up.

He walked through the world as through a vast hospital and his path was marked with mercy, and restored people praised God for his ministry.

The occasion on which he healed the woman in the synagogue precipitated the usual opposition of the rulers of the church, and we hear a pious man talking pompously of the sacred rights of the Sabbath day and of the sin of violating it even by such works of mercy. Strange how these Jewish eyes were blinded to their own Messiah and to the very splendor of God shining through his healing works.

> But prejudice has such power even among us, and men may still go as far astray in their judgments even of Christ.

Jesus is still a Healer in the midst of this sick and suffering and sinful world.

> He is manifesting his healing virtue in the forgiveness and comfort and cheer of the gospel, which is a means of driving out disease and stimulating health, and he is also serving the sick through the hands of medical men and nurses who are exercising knowledge and skill born of Christian enlightment and are verily his ministers, even when they know it not.

### *2. Jesus as a Teacher*

Teaching was another large part of the ministry of Jesus, and he stands forth in this light in these lessons. Almost every one of them involves some teaching on his part, and some of them are mainly didactical in character. Even when at a fashionable dinner party he appears as both a healer and teacher. He first scandalized his host by healing a dropsical man on the Sabbath, and then when he noticed how the guests were all pushing and crowding into the highest places and best seats at the table he dared to give them a lesson, with delicate tact, on good table manners.

> Nothing was trivial in the sight of Jesus when it was an indication of inner character and spirit, just as a leaf is not insignificant when it is the outgrowth of and expresses the whole nature of the tree.

The lesson he taught on this occasion was that of humility, a much needed lesson among us humans and yet one of the most difficult both to impart and to receive. The subject of his teaching on this occasion was not doctrinal but practical.

And this is broadly characteristic of all his teaching.

He was not a logical and theological reasoner, working out abstract doctrines along theoretical lines -an intellectual exercise so dear to the professional theologian—but he dealt in practical matters, repentance for sin, love to one's neighbor, and plain duties to man and to God.

These are the things we most need to know and to do, and these are the subjects on which he is still the world's master Teacher. We go to astronomers when we want to know about the sun and stars, and to the geologists when we want to know about mountains and rocks and rivers, but when we want to know the way of eternal life we must go to Jesus, for this is eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

### *3. Jesus as the Revealer of the Father*

The supreme subject of human knowledge is God, for our belief as to God will be the center of our circle that will determine the position of every point on the circumference of our universe. A man's belief as to God, we are told, is the deepest thing in him, whether we are listening to Carlyle or G. K. Chesterton or Herbert Spencer. These men, being Protestant, Roman Catholic and agnostic, are yet at one in this matter.

But everything depends on the kind of God in which we believe, and the Bible reveals and the Christian believes in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The parable of the Prodigal Son sets forth in picturesque language the relation of God to all men as their Father, and this divine Fatherhood antedates and outlasts man's fall into sin and alienation from God.

The prodigal son grew restless in his father's house and imagined he could have a better time in some far country of liberty and license, and so he ungraciously demanded his portion of the father's property and took himself off and soon had spent all and was reduced to swinish degradation.

All this vividly pictures man's wilful disobedience of God's will and way and his determination to run his own wild course.

The father permitted the son to have his way, for God will not coerce men to serve and love him. Yet the father was still the father of his lost son and was ever yearning and waiting for his return; and when the penitent boy drew near the old homestead the father hastened to receive him and showered upon him all the gifts of his favor and love.

**Even so is God always the Father of his lost children and is waiting for their return to him in penitence and faith that he may restore them to his love and home.**

**The principles of the parable of the Prodigal Son run all through the Bible and especially through the teaching of Jesus.**

**But not only in his teaching, but more clearly in his own person is Jesus the revelation of the Father, for he is God made manifest in the flesh, God come down to us in human form, so that he that hath seen him hath seen the Father.**

### *4. Jesus and Social Problems*

Social problems that press so keenly and urgently upon us in our day were also burning questions in the day of Christ. Two parables in this Quarter specially involve social questions, the Rich Man and Lazarus, and the Pounds.

In the first of these parables we have a picture of the frightful inequalities in economic conditions that are one of the most fundamental of social problems. The parable does not inquire into how these two men came to be so widely separated, the one at the top of the heap of wealth and luxury, and the other at its bottom. The rich man may have obtained his wealth legitimately, and the parable does not blame him for being rich.

**We have become more inquisitive and critical as to how a rich man acquires his wealth. We want to know if Dives has grown rich by robbing or sweating or exploiting Lazarus; if the one man's gain is the other man's loss; and we propose to devise means and methods by which we can prevent such unjust exploitation.**

Dives, however, is blamed in the parable for the manner in which he spent his wealth, for he lavished it upon his own selfish if not sensual gratification, swathing himself in comfort and luxury, while utterly indifferent and hard-hearted to Lazarus lying in rags and hunger at his palace gate.

This is a point where we are also beginning to inquire more definitely into the rich man's use of his wealth.

Rich men may have been in the habit of thinking that their wealth is their own and that the way they spend it is entirely their private affair, but our modern Christian conscience is rebelling against such a selfish view and beginning to insist that the expenditure of wealth is a matter of public interest and that private property in a degree is a public trust.

The social use of wealth is specially involved in the parable of the Pounds, for the servants to whom the pounds were entrusted were required to use them in trade and were then held responsible for a proper return from them.

The point impressed is that our possessions are not our private property to do with as we please, but a trust for which we must give account.

The social use of wealth and the social application of all his teachings were prominent points in the ministry of Jesus, and his principles on these subjects are still strikingly up to date and applicable to our modern conditions and life.

Such books as Francis G. Peabody's *Jesus Christ and the Social Question* are illuminating expositions of his social teachings and reveal him as the Master of our complex modern world.

### *5. Jesus as a Sufferer*

We might have thought that if this world were ever visited by a sinless and perfect Person it would have spared him any hardship and persecution and suffering.

But history bears witness that all great and good souls have experienced more than the average share of human trial and trouble.

They nearly all wear crowns that have been fashioned in the fires of great sorrows; and those that have escaped severe discipline usually exhibit some lack of character. The human spirit does not seem to thrive well in constant

warmth and sunshine. Cold and storm and lightning flash have had a part to play in developing deep roots and tough fibre in strong souls.

The greenhouse with its artificial heat and careful protection rears tender blooms that quickly wither, but oaks grow out in the open and are cradled in hardship and rocked by storms. "If I could make you suffer two years," said an eminent teacher to a promising pupil, "you would be the greatest contralto in the world"; but because she had been reared in luxury and had not suffered her voice lacked some vibrant note or subtle sympathetic quality that robbed it of sweetness and charm.

**So would the music of the world be rifled of much of its finest beauty and greatly impoverished if its minor chords of suffering and sorrow were stricken from its songs and symphonies. Masterful faith in God is attained only when we can exclaim, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."**

**Jesus was no exception to this human law of character, and he too was made "perfect through sufferings."**

For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and not only was subject to all the ordinary hardships of life, but he endured every contradiction of sinners against himself.

We have in this Quarter a glimpse into Gethsemane, the Garden of Sorrow, where we see him in mysterious agony, bearing the burden of the world's guilt, which was so heavy and sore that it pressed drops of blood out of his brow.

**Here he won the victory of the cross, paid the price of our redemption, and came forth calm and strong to endure the final agony of the cross.**

### *6. Jesus as a Dying Saviour*

The last scene in the Quarter is the world's supreme tragedy which occurred at the place of the skull, on that green hill without the city wall so far away and yet so near to the center of Christian faith and experience.

Sacrifice is another law of life, deep as the limestone rocks composed of the bones of myriads of tiny creatures that laid down their lives and left their skeletons to form the rocky knoll on which the cross was planted.

Up the whole scale of life plants and then animals are sacrificed for higher

forms of life, and this scarlet thread that is woven into the whole texture of the universe comes to its highest expression as it runs up to the cross of Christ and is deeply and richly dyed and colored in his blood. "His dying crimson, like a robe, spreads o'er his body on the tree," and this scarlet mantle still covers our sins, this fountain sends forth a stream of mercy and grace that washes away all sin.

**We cannot penetrate to the full secret of this sacrifice or pluck the heart out of its mystery, but we know that it was "for us he hung and suffered there."**

**Christian faith will never forsake the cross of Christ as the very means and price of our redemption, unless it is willing to become an ethical cult without a dynamic that can move the human heart and take away the sin of the world.**

**In this Quarter we have been looking on "Luke's Picture of Jesus," and he stands forth in these lessons in the perfection of his character and the greatness of his strength as Healer, Teacher, Revealer, Social Reformer, Sufferer and Dying Saviour.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give several instances in which Jesus healed people.
2. Name several fundamental doctrines in the teaching of Jesus.
3. To what extent did the world know God as Father before Jesus came?
4. What are some social problems that we should solve in a Christian spirit?
5. In what ways may suffering have a chastening effect upon us?
6. How does the death of Christ enter into the redemption of the world?
7. Combine the elements of these lessons into a complete picture of Jesus.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND QUARTER

With the Second Quarter we go back into the Old Testament and begin a six months' course on the Great Men and Women of the Bible. The Bible has its great men and women above any other volume of history in the world, and they have left their impress upon all succeeding ages.

Great men and women are the teachers and inspirers of mankind, the generals that direct its march, the thinkers and prophets that foresee the future and lay out plans. They are the path-breakers and road-builders of the world, the pioneers who go before and cut and clear a way through the jungles of the wilderness and throw bridges over the streams and find footsteps across the seas. They are the mountain peaks that lift the level of the land and determine the direction of the rivers and carve the continents of history. They are the watersheds of the world that throw the currents of the centuries into the channels of destiny.

**History is largely the biographies of these great men and women, for the masterful will of one man may control and direct the wills of tens or hundreds of millions of human beings.**

What would the Hebrew race and people have been without Abraham, or the Israelites without Moses, or Christianity without Paul, or the American colonies without Washington? A nation's whole history may be simply the lengthened shadow of one man.

**And who can calculate the infinite loss and lowering of all the levels of the world were Christ stricken from the calendar of the centuries!**

Our studies in this Quarter begin with Abraham, the ancestral head and fountain of the Hebrew race, whose shadow is still falling athwart the world. It is his supreme achievement that he was the first pioneer to go west in the most decisive pilgrimage ever undertaken by men, a journey out of the darkness of pagan idolatry into following the gleam of light that led him to the one true and living God.

**Because he started on that journey we are monotheists and Christians today.**

Moses takes up the story of the peculiar people and delivers them out of the slavery of Egypt into the freedom of a nation worshipping Jehovah. Samuel in turn is called to the leadership of this people when they were settled in their own promised land.

And then we study David, the poet-king, Elijah, the brave reformer, Isaiah and Jeremiah, heroic prophets in trying and tragic days, and end with Nehemiah, the bold builder, and Esther, the patriotic queen.

**These are great names and familiar, but we have not exhausted their interest and value and inspiration for us.**

As we go over these old records again we shall find them gleaming if not blazing with new light, opening new veins of treasure for the enrichment of our lives.

**Biography, it has been said, is history teaching by example, and in these lessons we are again taught how to live better lives by these men and women who, though they had not the brilliant light of our science and the marvels of our splendid material civilization, yet had the more vital light and guidance of the Spirit of God.**

# SECOND QUARTER

## Great Men and Women of the Bible

## I. The Old Testament

## (First Quarter of a Six Months' Course)

## LESSON I.—APRIL 1

### THE WALK TO EMMAUS

#### What Christ's Resurrection Means

*Golden Text: Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.* Luke 24:5–6.

**Devotional Reading:** Isaiah 53:7–12.

**Reference Material:** Deut. 18:15–19; Psalms 16:10; 22; 110; Isa. 61:1–6; Matt. 28:1–10; Acts 2: 22–36; I Cor. 15:3–20; Col. 3:1–4.

***Lesson Passage: Luke 24***

***Lesson Text: Luke 24:13–31***

13 ¶ And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* three-score furlongs.
14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.
15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.
16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.
17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?
18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?
19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:
20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.
21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.
22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;
23 And when they found not his body,

they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.
24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found *it* even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.
25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:
26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?
27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.
28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.
29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.
30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake, and gave to them.
31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

## LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

1. ***A Wayside Conversation.***
2. ***An Unrecognized Master.***
3. ***Astonished Yet Doubting Disciples.***
4. ***The Scriptures Opened.***
5. ***The Strange Guest Constrained to Tarry.***
6. ***The Recognition at the Supper Table.***

Come, Lord, and let us walk with thee;
Come, and unfold the words of heavenly life,
Till our souls burn within us, and the day
Breaks, and the Day-Star rises in our hearts.

The resurrection of Jesus is the complement of Calvary, the triumph that crowned the cross with victory and transfigured it with glory.

**Out of the empty tomb of the risen Christ gushed a flood of light that scattered the darkness of the crucifixion and irradiated the resurrection morning with splendor and has ever since illuminated the Christian world.**

There are five recorded appearances of Jesus on the day of the resurrection of Jesus: to Mary Magdalene, to the women returning from the empty sepulchre, to Simon Peter, to two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and in the evening to the eleven disciples except Thomas. Our lesson records the fourth of these appearances and is found only in Luke. One of the two disciples was named Cleopas, and the other remains unknown.

### *1. A Wayside Conversation*

These two disciples on their way up the steep rocky road to Emmaus, a village seven miles northwest of Jerusalem, talked together of the things that had happened that day. What else could they talk about? An event had been reported that had created a tremendous sensation, a sensation that has not subsided to this day. Their minds were full of the wonderful news and there was only one subject of conversation.

Conversation is one of the greatest privileges and enjoyments of life. It is the main channel of human communication and fellowship, without which the stream of life would run dry. Conversation creates and clarifies thought. In putting our minds together, one and one make more than two. We do not understand a subject well until we have talked it over and seen it from the point of view of other minds.

Religious conversation is especially illuminating and strengthening. It widens thought, intensifies faith and kindles zeal. "They that feared the Lord spake often one with another."

Private religious conversation should be cultivated in the home, between teacher and scholar, and between friend and friend; and the prayer meeting is especially a service in which Christians can talk together of the wonderful things of the kingdom.

As they talked Jesus himself drew near and went with them. Edifying religious conversation draws Jesus near and makes room for him in the company. If our communing be pure and loving he will join us in spirit, but if it be controversial and bitter it will drive his spirit away.

### *2. An Unrecognized Master*

Though Jesus was so near, yet these disciples did not know him: in some way their eyes were holden; they were not expecting to see him and he was doubtless dressed in unfamiliar garments or may have presented other strange aspects.

Our eyes are often holden that we do not recognize Jesus. He is never far off, but nigh us, even in our hearts, and yet we are so occupied with other things that we see him not.

Sometimes, also, we may not perceive him because he is dressed in an unfamiliar garb. Some excellent people cannot recognize Jesus unless he is dressed up as a Presbyterian or Methodist or Episcopalian; and if he appears in the robes of a Roman or Greek Catholic they may not see him at all.

**But Jesus is the same Christ under many outward forms, and our eyes should be unsealed that we may ever know our Lord.**

**It is pathetic to think of the unrecognized Master in the midst of his own disciples, and this same sad sight may still be seen today.**

### *3. Astonished yet Doubting Disciples*

"What manner of communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk, and are sad?" was the question which the unrecognized Master put to the disciples.

**The manner of our conversation is a test of life, and for every idle word we speak we shall give account.**

"And they stood still, looking sad," as we read in the Revised Version, struck motionless and silent with mournful astonishment at such a question. They stopped at the question of the Stranger and their troubled faces showed that the darkness of the crucifixion had not yet been wholly scattered by the morning of the resurrection.

Then Cleopas expressed surprise and intimated that the questioner must be a stranger in Jerusalem not to have known the things that had happened. "What things?" asked Jesus, to draw him out further.

Cleopas then gave a summary of the life and death of Jesus, which is interesting as being woven of the faith and doubt, the hopes and fears of the disciples on the day of the resurrection before the event was certainly confirmed. This was the state of mind of the disciples immediately after this event: still confused and bewildered by the death of Jesus, and amazed, or driven out of their senses as the word means, by the report that he was risen.

**They were not credulous enthusiasts, snatching at straws to confirm their faith, but were slow to believe and hard to convince, and it was out of this unfriendly temper and mood of mind that there grew up an unshakable faith in this fact.**

Their slowness to believe only rooted their faith and ours more deep and solid, and this psychological state of mind, so hostile to visions and hallucinations, is an important fact in the proof of the reality of this event.

### *4. The Scriptures Opened*

Yet their tardiness in faith was in some degree blameworthy, for it was partly due to ignorance of their own Scriptures. Jesus, having heard their narrative, broke into an exclamation of surprise that they were so dull of perception and so reluctant of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken.

These disciples were perplexed at the death of Jesus, but "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things," reasoned the Stranger, "and to enter into his glory?" And beginning from Moses and all the prophets he interpreted unto them all the Scriptures concerning himself.

The death of Jesus, then, was no accident or unforeseen event that blindly put an end to his life and work, but it was predicted by the prophets and was a vital part of his plan and was as old as the eternal counsel of God.

Christ is the luminous center of the Old Testament from whom all its rays radiate and in whose light all its events and types and prophecies are explained.

These disciples were familiar with the Scriptures and doubtless they thought they understood them, and yet there was a wealth of meaning in them that they had not found. They had caught partial aspects and fragments of truth, but had missed some of the deepest and most vital roots of redemption.

The Bible is still a book only partially explored. We have only touched its surface, and it contains hidden mines of treasure that wait for our study and meditation.

It is ignorance of the Word of God, of its plain teachings and its deep spiritual experiences, that so often deprives us of the peace and power of faith and makes us unfruitful and worldly.

The closet is the best study and the Spirit is the best commentator. "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

### *5. The Strange Guest Constrained to Tarry*

The three travelers were now drawing near to the village, but their unknown Companion made as though he would go further. He would have gone on if they had not invited him to stay. His action was conditional on their action.

This principle is woven into the whole web of life and is often justifiable and necessary, but it must be kept free from false pretence and deception.

**Jesus will not abide with us unless we invite him. He will not force his unwelcome presence on us and will not stay where he is not wanted.**

The presence of his Spirit in our hearts depends on our being in a state of sympathy and fellowship with him so that our hearts are a fit and congenial place for him. If we shut the door of our lives against him, he will not only make as though he would go further, but will surely go and leave us in our worldliness and sin.

**Jesus gives us an opportunity to invite him in and is willing and anxious to tarry with us, but he cannot come unbidden and, receiving no welcome, must reluctantly go on.**

But the disciples constrained him, saying, "Abide with us." They extended to him the courtesy of hospitality, and already their hearts had experienced a strange glow of faith and joy as he had unfolded the Scriptures so that they desired his further company.

**We can constrain Christ to abide with us.**

It requires no costly gift or rare genius or eloquence to secure his presence, but the humblest heart can be honored and made glad by his fellowship. Penitence for sin, hunger for righteousness, a sincere desire to know and love and serve him, are the only conditions of this high privilege; these are the invitations and welcome whose winsomeness he cannot resist and that constrain him as the loving child irresistibly woos and wins the mother's heart.

**The great need of our life is to have Jesus abide with us. He can forgive our sins, purify our hearts, solve our perplexities, heal our**

sorrows, and all along the paths of life keep our feet from stumbling and our eyes from tears.

Life is friendship more than anything else. We know not how much of earth's worth consists in certain voices, certain faces, the touch of certain hands and the coming of certain feet. Let him that doubts this wait until these hands have vanished and these feet have ceased to come.

But all human friendships are shadows of the deeper richer friendship we make our eternal possession and joy when Jesus comes into our hearts and lives to abide with us forevermore.

### *6. The Recognition at the Supper Table*

As they sat at meat, Jesus took bread and blessed it and brake it and gave to them. "And their eyes were opened, and they knew him." We do not know just how this recognition was brought about. There was some change in them or in him, so that his form grew familiar and the Master was with them once more.

Wondrous revelation and recognition! What glad surprise swept over their vision, what floods of joyous emotion surged through their souls; they were suddenly transformed as into other men and lived in a new world.

This recognition occurred in the midst of a common meal as Jesus blessed and brake the bread. These disciples had seen him revealed on greater occasions, possibly when he stilled the sea or raised the dead, but here they knew him as he broke the bread.

We do not need to stand on some mountain top of transfiguration and rare privilege and ecstatic joy, or do some great thing, in order to see Jesus: he can reveal himself to us as well in the ordinary events and duties and drudgeries of life, and whether we eat or drink, or buy or sell, or pray or play, or whatsoever we do, we may know him and have his presence with us.

Jesus vanished, for he cannot always be equally with us, or rather we cannot always be conscious of him. Life has its rare days and rich moments

when it is crowded to a glorious hour and a new splendor lies upon the very grass; and then the vision vanishes and there must be many common days.

**But whether the vision be present or absent we may always be with the Lord.**

"Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" It surely did. The richness of life is measured by the fulness and fineness of our feelings.

**The spirit of Jesus in our hearts tunes our souls so that all our powers vibrate in harmony and pour forth grand sweet strains of life.**

**The soul in which Jesus abides grows luminous with divine truth and it glows with love and peace and joy, for its life takes on deeper meaning and to it heaven comes close.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the events of the resurrection morning.
2. What are some of the uses of conversation in our life?
3. In what ways may Christ remain unrecognized among us?
4. May the Bible still be a sealed book to us?
5. How may we constrain Christ to abide with us?
6. How may Christ be revealed to us in the common things of life?
7. What does the resurrection of Christ mean for us?

# LESSON II.—APRIL 8

## ABRAHAM, THE HERO OF FAITH

### Abraham, a Pioneer of Faith

*Golden Text: Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* Romans 5:3.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 145:1–10.

**Reference Material:** II Chron. 20:7; Neh. 9:7–8; Psalm 105:6; Isa. 41:8; Matt. 3:9; Acts 7:2–4; Rom. 4:1–25; Gal. 3:6–10; James 2:21–24.

***Lesson Passages: Gen. 12:1–25:8; Hebrews 11:8–19***

***Lesson Text: Gen. 12:1–5; Heb. 11:8–10, 17–19***

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram *was* seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*,

18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. A Call to the Unknown.***

***2. Gain for Loss.***

***3. The Departure.***
***4. Family and Baggage.***
***5. In Canaan.***
***6. The Pilgrimage of Life.***

Abraham was the first pioneer to go west of whom we read. With him begins a new chapter of human history as the star of empire starts westward. In him we have the germ and fountain of the Jewish race, that strange and wonderful people that are separate from the world to this day.

In him also the work of redemption is called off from the world at large and narrowed down to a select race for a limited time and a special purpose; not that the rest of the world might be excluded from divine grace, but that in the fulness of time salvation might come to all the ends of the earth.

**God first made sure of one man in order at length to save all men.**

### *1. The Call to the Unknown*

The call to Abram was to get out of his own country into a far-off land, he knew not where. The call suddenly uprooted his whole life, tearing him away from country and kindred. His native land and scenes and associations were dear to him, but they were all to be cut off and left behind by this call. The European emigrant has this experience, but he is young and may be driven out by economic pressure and political tyranny and is lured on into a land of freedom and wealth.

Abram was now seventy-five years old and was rich, yet he was to tear himself loose and push out into the desert towards an unknown country. There must have been some imperative necessity for this call: what was it?

**Abram was the one man in the world that had a clear and living faith in the one true God, a strong grip on monotheism in the midst of a polytheistic world. This faith was of such vital importance to the world that it had to be preserved at any cost.**

To save Abram and ultimately with him all the world it was necessary to isolate him and put the world under quarantine. This was a radical remedy, but it was the only one that would work.

**Christians must still come out from the world in spirit. We cannot save the world by being like the world; and we cannot thus be**

saved ourselves. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.

### *2. Gain for Loss*

On the hard knotted root of this call grows a rich cluster of promises. For loss of country, Abram was to become the founder of a great nation; for loss of earthly goods God would bless him; and his name should be crowned with fame. There would be such union and identity of Abram with God that whoever touched the one would be repaid by the other.

**The good man has God behind him.**

Abram not only would be blessed himself, but he would be a blessing, unconsciously radiating holy influences on all around him and in the wide sweep of his power all the families of the earth should by him be made better. Thus for all his loss Abram was to receive manifold and marvelous compensation.

**When God takes anything from us he always puts something better in its place. For every material loss there is some richer spiritual gain.**

God never routs us out of a comfortable nest simply to get us out. The eagle roughens the nest and pushes the young eaglet out that it may spread its wings in the wide and boundless blue; and God often pushes us out of narrow comfort into ultimate wider space and larger liberty; his calls are upward to broader service, freer life and richer joy.

Great calls to duty are always topped out with great promises. God does not ask us to serve him for nothing while the devil is offering us big pay. Men must have great rewards to spur them on to high action. All the great achievements of the world have been born of great hopes. It was the splendid lure of gold that hung like a glittering star over the East that coaxed and urged Columbus out over an unknown sea. Jesus endured the cross for the joy that was set before him. The command, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," is completed and crowned with the transcendent promise, "and thou shalt be saved."

**We are not to serve God for pay, but out of loyal service to him will come life more abundant. "The judgments of the Lord are true . . . and in keeping of them there is great reward."**

This promise to Abram has been grandly fulfilled. If he had stayed in Haran he would have been lost in the forgotten millions of that buried civilization, but coming out from them he became one of the most influential and famous men of all time.

**He is the one upstanding man of his age whose name we know, whose life we are studying and whose thought is still helping to shape our lives.**

### *3. The Departure*

"So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him." There is something sublime in this calm statement. Dropping his old life without question or delay, he departed as the Lord had spoken. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed"

**Faith was the powerful mainspring of this heroic adventure.**

Setting his face towards the west in a desert whose terminus was unknown to him was as splendid faith as that which led Columbus to venture out upon an uncharted ocean with all its real dangers and imaginary horrors. All the great achievements of the world have been adventures lured and driven on by the mystic urge of faith. The scientist is always launching out upon the unknown deeps of the universe in search of new stars and electrons and facts and forces, and faith is his instinct and guide. The poet has the same insight and trust in the rationality and beauty of the world, and the prophet follows the gleam of the same star.

**Our life would be miserably shut in and bound by the shallows and swamps of the world if we did not have the instinct and spirit of faith "to sail beyond the sunset and the baths of all the western stars, until we die."**

Abraham did not know whither he was going, but he knew that the Lord was leading him. He had learned the secret of unquestioning obedience. He did not ask to see the distant scene: one step enough for him. There was no gap between his creed and his conduct. As the Lord had spoken, so he did.

**The great need of our lives is to keep our obedience abreast of our knowledge. The Lord has spoken to us and we know his will;**

now let us have brave faith and courage to do his will, though it be to leave pleasant things behind us and go out into a desert we know not whither.

Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out on his great adventure, and we are never too old to learn and life is ever full of fresh fields and untrodden paths and new experiences for us. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age" (Ps. 92:14).

### *4. Family and Baggage*

Abram took with him his household and his substance. Wife and kindred and servants must have already shared in some degree in his faith, and he was able to take them with him out of the old life of idolatry into the new life of obedience to the one true and living God.

The Christian should not go alone into the kingdom.

Jesus found Philip and then Philip found Nathanael. Thus the golden chain has had link after link added to it until it has come down to each one of us. It is now our duty to find the next one and thus keep the chain lengthening on until it binds Christ's first with his second coming.

Especially should each one endeavor to lead his own household into the kingdom. God, having bound us all up in the same bundle of physical and affectional life in the home, does not mean that we should be separated in the larger family of his redeemed children and in the everlasting home.

Abram also took his substance along with him. Household goods, utensils, tents, implements, tools, food, clothing, money,—all these things were as necessary in the new land and life as they had been in the old country. He did not start stripped of these things, but with a complete outfit. Camels and horses were loaded with his bags and baggage. He was no visionary dreamer, cutting loose from the practical needs of life, but with his head above the stars he yet kept his feet down upon the earth.

The Christian in starting out on the adventure of faith with Christ must take all his goods with him. His pocketbook and all that he has must go along.

The Christian enterprise calls for an expensive outfit in means and appliances, churches, schools, hospitals, Bibles, books, ministers and missionaries, many institutions and a vast plant. All this costs money, and Christians must pay the bills. Their silver and gold and bank stock must be converted and dedicated to the Lord along with their souls.

**Too many of us want to go with Christ into the religious life and especially into heaven, while leaving our money and property back in the old life of this world.**

**But this division cannot be made: all must go together; soul and substance, religion and business, faith and money, piety and pocketbook, all must set out together and travel in one caravan and tent on this great adventure of life.**

### *5. In Canaan*

The long journey is over, the scene suddenly shifts to the promised land, and what is the first thing we read? "And the Canaanite was then in the land."

Does not the statement seem to mock poor Abram's faith? Instead of getting out of idolatry he got into it worse than ever. Instead of finding a richer country he found a rocky strip of coast infested with idolaters in the depths of superstitious degradation. He had left a splendid civilization for semi-savage tribes.

Did it ever occur to the old man's heart that his new faith was a delusion and that he had made a mistake? No, he had made no mistake because God had made no mistake. The Pilgrims and Puritans made no mistake when they left the rich lands of old England for the bleak shores of New England. Columbus made no mistake when he sailed away from poor old Spain and stumbled upon the broad and splendid continent of America.

Abram was separated from idolatry in the new scenes as he could not have been in the old, and the new country was rich in possibilities and had a great future.

**God in blessing us is often looking far ahead.**

Nevertheless Abram was not yet free from temptation and trial. The Cannaanite was there to endanger and vex him, and he still had battles to fight and plenty of work to do. Wherever we go we shall find the Canaanite in the land.

God may change our place and work, but wherever he sends us we shall have temptations to resist, disappointments to meet and hardships to bear.

One presence, however, Abram did find in the new country: God. The Lord appeared unto him there. His presence cheered and sustained the weary pilgrim's heart.

However far we travel we cannot get outside of God's presence and he will appear unto us.

Up went an altar and the new land was dedicated unto the Lord. Whatever new possession we find in the adventure of faith, any enlargement and enrichment of our life should at once be consecrated to the service of God.

### *6. The Pilgrimage of Life*

Yet the journey was not ended. Abram removed thence and ever kept pitching his tents towards the west and south. Wherever he stopped he could not stay, but soon found reason for moving on.

Life with us is an endless pilgrimage. Our habitations, though they be built of stone and steel, are yet only tents for a little day and soon will be gone. A few years will roll over our graves and our very names will be forgotten.

Whatever our condition, it cannot last. Wherever we are today we shall be elsewhere tomorrow. Move on we must; for here we have no continuing city, but we seek a country and look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

#### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of Abram's family connections (Chapter 11:26-32).
2. Give some account of Haran.
3. Why was it necessary that Abram should be called out of Haran?
4. What are some of the reasons that impel men to emigrate today?
5. What adventures into the unknown are we called upon to make?
6. Give an account of some other heroes of faith (Hebrews 11).

# LESSON III.—APRIL 15

## JOSEPH, THE PRESERVER OF HIS PEOPLE

### The Inspiring Example of Joseph

*Golden Text: Honor thy father and thy Mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord they God giveth thee.* Ex. 20:12.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 20:1–9.

**Reference Material:** Josh. 24:32; Psalm 105:16–22; John 4:5; Acts 7:9–14; Heb. 11:21–22.

***Lesson Passages: Gen. 30:22 24; 37:2 50:26***

***Lesson Text: Genesis 45:3–15***

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I *am* Joseph: doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.
4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I *am* Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.
5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.
6 For these two years *hath* the famine *been* in the land: and yet *there are* five years, in the which *there shall* neither *be* earing nor harvest.
7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.
8 So now *it was* not you *that* sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.
9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:
10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:
11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet *there are* five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.
12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that *it is* my mouth that speaketh unto you.
13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.
14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.
15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. An Astounding Revelation.***

***2. Stricken Consciences.***

*3. A Gracious Invitation.*
*4. Divine Providence Interpreted.*
*5. A Noble Message.*
*6. A Touching Scene*

Nine years had passed since Joseph became ruler of Egypt, and in this lesson the complicated story of this domestic tragedy reaches a crisis and the plot of Providence is laid bare. The years of plenty had poured their abundance into great granaries, and a famine is now on. Egypt is drawing on its store, and neighboring nations, involved in the same famine, are coming to buy bread.

The distress strikes Canaan, and the sons of Jacob are forced to go down into Egypt. Did the thought of a long-lost brother make them fear to enter that land? In due time they appeared in Egypt and bowed down before Joseph himself, though they knew him not.

The rapid play of events is now told with dramatic pathos and power. Joseph charges his brothers with being spies, learns about his father's family, and demands that the youngest brother be brought down. Simeon is kept as a hostage and the frightened brothers return home. Sorrowing old Jacob is alarmed over their report and refuses to give Benjamin up. The increasing distress at last forces him to yield and the brothers return with Benjamin into Egypt.

Joseph involves Benjamin in an apparent theft and seizes him. The alarm of the brothers is pitiful, and Judah makes a noble appeal to Joseph to release Benjamin, offering himself as a bondman instead.

**These brothers are beginning to appear in a better light and are showing themselves true sons of the covenant, worthy fathers of the tribes of Israel.**

### *1. An Astounding Revelation*

Up to this point Joseph had been dealing with his brothers as utter strangers, speaking to them through interpreters and concealing his identity from them, though he knew them. But the speech of Judah was too much for him. Home recollections, his childhood scenes and associations, sent a storm of emotion surging through his soul, and he felt himself giving way. The room was quickly cleared of all attendants, and Joseph was left alone with his brothers.

Some scenes are too private for mere spectators to witness. There are chambers of joy and sorrow into which strangers should not intrude.

Then Joseph broke down and wept. The strong man sobbed like a child. This was not unmanly weakness in Joseph, but a noble exhibition of deep and tender feeling.

Beware of the man who cannot cry: he is probably as hard and cold as steel. Tears are divine. Jesus wept. Tears are the flood tide of both joy and sorrow and are a blessed relief to the surcharged soul.

Then the ruler of Egypt uttered the startling words, "I am Joseph." For the first time the brothers heard themselves addressed in their own language and recognized the voice and features of the boy-dreamer whom they had sold.

One thought was urgent in Joseph's mind and instantly leaped to his lips: "Doth my father yet live?" Twenty-two years of absence had not extinguished his filial love and longing. The old homestead up in Canaan was still more to him than the empire of Egypt and his aged father was dearer to him than Pharaoh.

That is a cold and selfish man who, as he grows successful and great, forgets his old home and his aged parents.

### *2. Stricken Consciences*

How startled and stunned the brothers must have been at the amazing revelation! No wonder that they could not answer him: for they were troubled at his presence. Like a flash of lightning the disclosure illuminated the past and made it blaze with retribution. Already the thought of their guilt had been burning in their hearts. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us" (Chapter 42:21).

Twenty-two years had passed, but conscience had not forgotten their guilt and the sword of retribution was sharper than ever. When they dropped

Joseph into the pit they sat down to eat bread, but now they were troubled at his presence.

Time has no power to heal wrong. Forgetfulness cannot wipe out the past. Oblivion cannot save us from sin. We may leave a wrong far behind us and think it is buried forever, but its retribution never sleeps, and one day it will rise up out of its grave as a ghost to plague us.

Whither, then, shall we fly? The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

### *3. A Gracious Invitation*

Joseph now addressed his brothers in different tones: "Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near." Why had he not done this before? Why all this tantalizing and apparently cruel treatment of his brothers? Was he paying them back? No, but he was testing them and feeling his way along cautiously.

We must interpret Joseph's action from Joseph's point of view.

He had known his brothers as selfish, treacherous, cruel men: were they the same men still? If they were, he would have to be chary of entering into relations with them. He could not bring such men into Egypt. The only course open to him was to try them in some unobserved way and find out what manner of men they were.

When they all stood by Benjamin, and Judah made his noble speech Joseph saw that they were changed men, and then he could safely reveal himself to them.

"Come near to me I pray you. I am Joseph your brother." This principle enters into our relations with one another and into God's providence over us. Much of our heavenly Father's treatment that seems rough and strange to us is intended to test and discipline us, leading us along paths of penitence and trust into peace with him.

Often when God seems to be driving us off, he is getting ready to say, "Come near to me."

Joseph was moved by a brotherly spirit of magnanimity in his dealing with his brothers at this point. He did not catch them in a trap to squeeze anything out of them or in any way take advantage of them, but he was getting them into a state of mind in which he could draw them near to himself.

If all men in their various relations and dealings with one another were governed by this principle and spirit; if the employer were to say to his employe, "Come near to me, I am your brother," and the employe were to approach the employer in the same spirit; if all social classes, churches, states, and nations were to approach one another in this spirit, would it not solve our industrial and social and political problems and harmonize all these relations?

Were this principle universally and thoroughly applied it would reorganize society and revolutionize the world.

### *4. Divine Providence Interpreted*

Joseph next comforts his brothers by interpreting the divine purpose in the strange providence. With swift glance he untangles the whole complicated plot. God was back of it all. The famine was to last five years more and God had brought Joseph down into Egypt that he might save the whole family.

This purpose explained the working together of all things from the day Joseph, the shepherd boy, left his father's house for the last time, wearing his coat of many colors, and was sold by his brothers to the Midianite merchants, until the day Joseph, ruler of Egypt, said to these same brothers bowing down before him, "I am Joseph." All these events were hitherto tangled together and hidden in the darkness; but now they were suddenly straightened out and laid bare.

We cannot make much out of providence while we are in the midst of it; very often it all seems a muddle. It is only when we get farther on and up that we can look back upon it and see it running along in luminous lines. We must give God time and wait.

But though Joseph consoled his penitent brothers with this divine side of Providence, yet their side was not less guilty. God may overrule our evil for good, but we cannot plead his grace as an excuse for our sin. The slime

of the swamp is not less filthy because the sunlight falls upon it in stainless purity and makes it bloom into the matchless pond lily.

**Sin is not less guilty in us because out of it God may bring forth fruits of righteousness.**

### *5. A Noble Message*

Joseph gave his brothers a message for his father and a pressing invitation to come down into Egypt. With beautiful humility he ascribes his elevation as lord of Egypt to God; he urges his father to come and dwell in the land of Goshen with his children and his grandchildren and all his flocks and herds; there he will nourish them during the famine; and as an assurance and a comfort his brothers shall tell his father of all his glory in Egypt.

This noble message throws a strong light on Joseph's character. He was not spoiled by his wonderful exaltation, but retained his trust in God, his humility and his filial affections. His religion and his character stood the severest test of worldly success. His care for his father in his old age is one of the most beautiful things in his life.

**Children ought always to be thoughtful of their parents in their last days. Smooth the path of old age and brighten it all you can.**

**Joseph, being in the land of plenty, now desired to bring his kindred in. The Christian, having entered the kingdom of life, next thinks of his kindred and strives to bring others in.**

**No one need stay in the famine-stricken land of sin. There is bread in our Father's house and to spare. "Come thou with us and we will do thee good."**

### *6. A Touching Scene*

Then follows a touching scene. Joseph fell weeping upon Benjamin's neck. And Joseph kissed all his brethren and wept upon them; and after that all his brothers talked with him. Joseph forgave them all, and there was profound and blessed reconciliation.

**In this act of forgiveness Joseph is at his highest and greatest, and his character shines out in purest splendor.**

He had these brothers, who had once heartlessly sold him into slavery completely in his power. By the wave of his hand he could have doomed

them to hopeless bondage, or have executed them as spies. Yet no revenge rankled in his heart, not even did justice control his course, he assumed no haughty air towards them, but was simply a brother among them and freely forgave them all.

Here is a noble lesson for us. We all have wrongs and grievances, real or imaginary, that others have inflicted on us. The disposition is deep and strong in us to " pay them back " and " get even with them." We sometimes see professing Christians trying to revenge injuries with as cunning malice as was ever displayed by a painted Indian in the forest. Nothing is more thoroughly unchristian and wicked than this spirit. May God fill us with the grace of forgiveness.

" Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give an account of the train of events leading up to this lesson.
2. What is the value to us of our childhood recollections?
3. Why did Joseph conceal his identity from his brothers so long?
4. How can we get near to one another?
5. What are some principles that we must use in interpreting providence?
6. How can we cherish and practice the spirit of forgiveness?

# LESSON IV.—APRIL 22

## MOSES: LIBERATOR AND LAWGIVER

### The Character of Moses

*Golden Text: Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.* Exodus 14:13.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 70:1–5.

**Reference Material:** Deut. 3:23–28; Psalms 105:23–45; 106:7–33; Matt. 17:3; Acts 7:17–44; II Cor. 3:7–13; Heb. 11:23–29.

***Lesson Passages: Exodus 2:1–19:25; 32:1–33:23; Deut. 34:1–3***

***Lesson Text: Exodus 14:10, 13–22***

10 ¶ And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.

13 ¶ And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

15 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:

16 But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry *ground* through the midst of the sea.

17 And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

18 And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

19 ¶ And the Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness *to them*, but it gave light by night *to these:* so that the one came not near the other all the night.

21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry *land*, and the waters were divided.

22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry *ground:* and the waters *were* a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Standing Still and Going Forward.***

***2. The Pillar of Light and of Darkness.***

***3. Divided Sea and Dry Land.***
***4. The Overwhelmed Egyptians.***
***5. From Africa to Asia.***

At midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in Egypt. Instantly there was a scene of indescribable confusion and horror throughout the land. One thought seized the panic-stricken Egyptians: the hated Hebrews must be gotten out of the country before morning. Pharaoh sent in hot haste for Moses and Aaron and ordered them to take their people and flocks and begone.

The Passover had prepared them for departure and the start was made. Their course ran southeastward and in a few days they struck a northern arm of the Red Sea. Pharaoh had already repented of his action and was closing in behind them with his chariots of war. The Israelites were caught between Pharaoh and the sea, and it seemed that all was lost.

That night, amidst a terrible storm, they passed through the divided waters of the sea, and the next morning they stood on the farther side and saw the dead bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the shore.

The exodus was the most dramatic and thrilling event in the history of the Jews and has been celebrated in memorial and story and song to this day.

It is one of the epochal events of the world, and "history herself was born on that night when Moses led forth his countrymen from the land of Goshen."

### *1. Standing Still and Going Forward*

While the people of Israel were in a panic of fear Moses stood up in his mighty faith and courage and uttered great words that inspired and saved them. They were cowering and cringing between the Egyptians and the sea, seeing only their enemies and forgetting God. Then it was that the voice of Moses rang out clear as a trumpet, bidding them to fear not but stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

There are times when intense activity is the urgent duty of the hour, and other times when passive waiting is equally a duty. It is often the hardest and bravest work just to wait, but these are moments and crises when we must be still and let God act.

"The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace," declared Moses, for the Lord is a God of war and can let loose all the artilleries of heaven. Yet very soon the Lord also said unto Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."

Passive waiting may be quickly followed by intense activity. There may be a time and critical conjunction of affairs when even prayer is inopportune if not impertinent, and human urgency in the use of means is the only duty of the moment.

It is no time to cry unto the Lord when we should be straining every nerve to do our own part in the onrush and pressure of events.

Standing still and going forward are two apparently contradictory attitudes that enter into all our life. We are to stand still in prayer and faith and patient waiting, and then go forward bravely along the path of active obedience.

### 2. *The Pillar of Light and of Darkness*

Before the Israelites entered the sea the pillar of cloud that had marched before them moved from their front to the rear and hung as a veil between them and the Egyptians. This pillar was a symbol of God's presence and guidance. From every quarter of the camp or moving column its majestic form was visible day and night, floating as a mass of fleecy whiteness, or waving as a manner of light or pillar of flame.

It was a splendid picture language, or child's word, telling of the divine presence and protection.

This cloud has long since vanished in the air and we are no longer given such sign language. We do not need it.

We have a better means of divine leading and illumination in the inspired Word which reveals the truth of God, and in Jesus, who is Immanuel, God with us. Under the light of these revelations we see God everywhere and all things are symbols of his presence.

Every cloud is a manifestation of God and a messenger of mercy. "Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God."

The same pillar that was a means of light and guidance to the Israelites was a means of darkness and confusion to the Egyptians. The same sunlight that builds up a living plant tears down one that is dead.

**Everything is for us or against us according as we are in the path of obedience and righteousness, or of disobedience and sin.**

### *3. Divided Sea and Dry Land*

At the moment when the Israelites were caught between Pharaoh and the sea and all was confusion and terror. "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind and all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left."

The great event is told with impressive simplicity. Tradition and poetry would have embellished the narrative with richer rhetoric, but the account in its severe self-restraint bears the marks of truth.

**The divine interposition is clear in the event, and yet God brought it about by natural means.**

A storm swept the shallow sea from its bed, and storms have done the same thing in the Gulf of Suez in modern times. God honors ordinary means and keeps close to nature even in working miracles.

**Who can tell where the natural leaves off and the supernatural begins in the world around us? Are they not both harmonious parts of the same system, the working of the same immanent God?**

Across the soft sandy bottom, sprinkled with spray torn from the angry billows, protected from the Egyptians by the pillar of cloud marching behind them, the Israelites escaped from bondage into liberty and entered upon their career as a nation.

**This grand experience of the Hebrews that burnt itself so deep into their national consciousness is often reproduced on a small scale in our lives.**

Providence sometimes leads us into a narrow defile between mountain and sea, with disaster pressing in behind us and there seems no way of escape. These are hours that try us when we must stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

Then the command comes to go forward, and as we advance perhaps seeing only one step at a time the way opens before us through the very heart of the difficulty, and where rolled angry waves there is now dry land for our feet.

**Our God is a great God and strong wind and stormy sea obey him. He is faithful and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape.**

### *4. The Overwhelmed Egyptians*

The pursuing Egyptians rushed in after the retreating Israelites. Avarice and revenge and defiance of Israel's God made them reckless and furious. Their blinded folly resulted in an unparalleled tragedy.

The storm was at the height of its fury. The pillar of cloud became a pillar of fire blazing with lightnings. Amidst lightning flash and thunder crack and the roar of the sea, the Egyptians became terrorized and panic-stricken. The wheels of their chariots were clogged or wrenched off in the sand. They began to realize that the God of Israel was fighting against them, and amidst the awful confusion the cry was raised to fly and escape by whatever way they could.

The Hebrew hosts were now safe on the solid shore, and at the divine command Moses stretched his hand back over the sea. The waters unloosed from their restraint rushed and leaped with deafening roar and maddened foam upon the struggling shouting, cursing Egyptians, smothering their cries and burying warriors and horses and chariots deep under the waves. Not one man escaped.

With the morning light the sea again slept calmly in its bed and Israel saw the Egyptians dead along its shore.

This tragic event seized upon the Hebrew imagination and wrought itself into the great poem contained in the next chapter, and into other psalms. "I will sing of the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

**Good men can go where bad men cannot follow. The Lord's guidance gives safety, and they that follow Pharaoh run terrible risks.**

The same mighty agencies that God uses for the protection of the righteous he also wields for the punishment of the wicked, even as the same government that protects its loyal citizens destroys those that rebel against it, and the same train that carries its passengers in safety to their destination crushes him that stands upon its track.

Yet divine judgments are never arbitrary and unjust. The Egyptians brought this doom upon themselves. It was of their own will and wickedness that they rushed into this devouring sea. Who rushed into Belgium and are now reaping their own retribution?

Sinners reap just what they sow. "They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices" (Prov. 1:30–31). Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

### *5. From Africa to Asia*

But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea and stepped upon the farther shore. This simple statement designates one of the greatest crossings in history.

"They had passed that night from Africa to Asia; they had crossed one of the great boundaries which divide quarters of the world; a thought always thrilling, how much more when we reflect on what a transition it involved to them. Behind the African hills, which rose beyond the Red sea, lay the strange land of their exile and bondage—the land of Egypt with its mighty river, its immense buildings, its monster worship, its grinding tyranny, its overgrown civilization. This they had left to revisit no more. And before them stretched the level plains of the Arabian desert where their fathers and their kindred had wandered in former times, where their great leader had led the flocks of Jethro, through which they must advance onwards till they reach the Land of Promise."

But the moral change was immensely greater than the physical. Behind them lay slavery, before them lay freedom. Behind them lay idolatry, before them lay spiritual worship.

Behind them lay the stagnant polluted Nile, before them lay the rushing Jordan, fed by mountain springs and eternal snows, and limpid Galilee whose shores would be forever hallowed by the footprints of Jesus.

Behind them lay the huge temples and vast pyramids containing coffined mummies, before them lay the Tabernacle and Temple, Sinai and Jerusalem, psalmists and prophets and apostles, and in the fulness of time as the fulfillment and perfect blossom of all their national development and glory, the promised Messiah, the Son of God.

Human agency played a very subordinate part in this wonderful deliverance which was wrought by the interposition of Almighty God; and it remained through all Jewish history and song as the supreme illustration and proof of God's care over his people.

It is still a grand illustration of deliverance from sin into salvation. Behind us lies the slavery of sin and before us lies the liberty of the sons of God. Behind us we leave the selfishness and tyranny and idolatry of the world and before us we enter into the love and brotherhood and spiritual worship and service of the kingdom of Christ.

The Christian life is one of hope ever looking forward into new and grander vistas opening out before it. The best things for the Christian are yet to come.

Our Promised Land lies not behind us in this world, but before us, stretching beyond the horizon out across the sea of Death into the eternal world where stand the redeemed who sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the events that led up to the Exodus.
2. Describe the geography in the neighborhood of the Red Sea.
3. Show how standing still and going forward are interwoven in our life.
4. Why do we not have visible pillars of cloud to guide us?
5. Point out some deliverances and also some judgments that have come upon modern nations. What liberators have we had in our history?
6. What deliverances from sin have we experienced?

# LESSON V.—APRIL 29

## RUTH, THE FAITHFUL DAUGHTER

### The Secret of Ruth's Noble Life

*Golden Text: Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.* Ruth 1:16.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 91:1–7.

**Reference Material:** Ruth 1–4

***Lesson Passage: Ruth 1:4***

***Lesson Text: Ruth 1:14–22***

14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again, and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.
15 And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.
16 And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God.
17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried, the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if aught* but death part thee and me.
18 When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.
19 ¶ So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, *Is* this Naomi?
20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.
21 I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?
22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab; and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

#### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***
***1. Two Choices.***
***2. A Beautiful Confession of Faith.***
***3. A Sensational Event in Bethlehem.***
***4. A Bright Crown.***

The Book of Ruth gives us a glimpse into the home life in Israel in the rough times of the Judges. The history of this period makes upon us the

impression of constant war and social chaos. But this was only the superficial state of affairs, while underneath lay a broad expanse of peaceful homes and contented life; just as under the storm that blots out the sun and all the landscape there stretch fruitful fields and many tender flowers find shelter and all life goes on.

It was about the days of Gideon that hard times in Judah drove a family in Bethlehem into that painful and pathetic course of relief, emigration and expatriation. Elimelech and his wife Naomi and their two sons crossed the Jordan and passed southeastward along the eastern shore of the Dead Sea into the land of Moab, where they settled.

Ten years passed and changes came. Elimelech died, and the two sons married Moabitish wives and also died. Thus Noami was left alone in a strange land with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth.

News having arrived of better times in Judah, the widow resolved to return to her native country, and the daughters-in-law resolved to go with her. At the borders of Moab, Naomi urged Orpah and Ruth to return to their own people. There was a pathetic scene in which the Jewish mother and Moabitish daughters embraced one another in tears and seemed about to part. Both daughters-in-law renewed their resolution to continue on with Naomi. Naomi again pressed them to return, and then one strand of love broke and the other held.

**It is a charming story that has always elicited admiration and Goethe characterized it as " the loveliest little idyll that tradition has transmitted to us."**

### *1. Two Choices*

Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and went back unto her own people and unto her pagan god; but Ruth clave unto her.

We must be cautious in our judgment of Orpah and sparing in our blame. Orpah simply did what Naomi herself urged her to do. It is a serious and painful step and one not easily retraced to leave home and friends and native land; and it is a still more serious step to abandon one's ancestral religion and adopt a new and foreign faith.

It is little wonder, then, that Orpah, much as she loved Naomi, loved her own people more and at the critical moment turned back.

Yet the fact stands against Orpah that having seen the light of a better faith she turned her face from it and went back to a hideous heathen god.

**Having seen a better light we can never walk in the old path again and be guiltless; and this shadow falls across Orpah's path.**

But Ruth clave unto Naomi. Orpah loved, but Ruth loved more, and when Orpah's faith broke, Ruth's held. It was a great sacrifice that Ruth was making, but she was following the gleam of her best light, and we feel that her course was nobler than that of Orpah. She loved more deeply and believed more trustfully and persistently than her sister-in-law. Her character was more finely tempered and kept its edge better.

These two young women were brought up in the same environment and were exposed to the same influences. Their lives ran side by side up to a certain point. But at this critical point one turned back and the other pressed on.

**Life contains many such partings, and they are often inexplicable. The deepest explanation of such partings is that each one goes his own way, the way of his own choosing.**

### *2. A Beautiful Confession of Faith*

Ruth's entreaty is an outburst of profound passion and is one of the most beautiful things in the Bible. While it is an expression of human love, it is also an expression of divine faith and the deepest chord in it is her choice of God's people.

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee," for sometimes our dearest friends are mistaken in their entreaties, or are testing our faithfulness. "Save me from my friends" is often the wise man's wish.

**It is hard to resist the mistaken kindness of our dear ones, but sometimes we must do it.**

"Whither thou goest, I will go." Where to go, what path to follow, is life's constant problem, and this is largely solved for us when we go with God's people.

**It is safe and blessed to go with them into their service and trials and rewards, and at last into that country which they are seeking.**

"Where thou lodgest, I will lodge." Where we stop is as important as where we go; rest is as vital a part of life as work.

**The Christian lodges in the house of faith; he lies down in the Everlasting Arm, in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty.**

"Thy people shall be my people." Life more than anything else is personal companionship, friendship. Given a man's associations and we know the man.

**The Christian's associations are honorable and delightful, among the best people, the truest aristocracy.**

"Thy God my God." The God we choose is the greatest choice of life. Nothing else goes so deep down into character and so far out into conduct.

**The Christian's God is the one true and living God, the Father of our spirits and the Redeemer of our souls.**

"Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried." "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

**"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."**

"The Lord do so to me, and more also if aught but death part us." Christian friendship is immortal and we are persuaded that neither life nor death shall separate us from the love of God.

**This was Ruth's passionate expression of love and her beautiful confession of faith. This heathen convert sets up a high ideal for us, as many heathen converts do to this day. Her faith was the secret of her noble life.**

### *3. A Sensational Event in Bethlehem*

The pleading of Ruth silenced the importunate Naomi, and the two went on until they came to Bethlehem. Their arrival set the women's tongues

ageing and the village was a buzz of gossip. The event created a sensation in the sleepy old town and the inhabitants waked up to find they had something to talk about. Such personal gossip is often the food of village society and is not altogether unwholesome, as it acts as a public censor of morals.

**After all, the most interesting thing to us humans is just human doings, and this is as true of the city as of the village.**

"Is this Naomi?" was the question that flew around among the villagers. "Is this the woman that went away ten years ago and has she come back in such reduced circumstances with a foreign daughter-in-law on her hands?"

The stinging question of her old acquaintances and neighbors called for a bitter reply. Noami felt that a disgrace had come upon her and that the Almighty had dealt harshly with her and had testified against her. So deeply had this feeling pervaded her soul that she wanted her name changed to Mara ("bitter") that she might wear the name as a sable emblem of her embittered life. "All these things are against me" was the thought of her heart.

There seems to have been a spirit of melancholy in Noami that at times enshrouded her in despondency that her faith could not dissipate. Such periods of depression are not unknown to the Christian and to the purest saints and strongest heroes of faith.

**Almost all of the great characters of the Bible, such as Moses and David and Elijah, passed through them. Jesus himself was troubled and even found himself in a great horror of darkness. The Christian must not think it strange if this trial comes upon him.**

### *4. A Bright Crown*

"And they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest." This apparently trivial incident in their return marked a turning point for the better in their fortunes and opened a door into undreamed of attainments and blessings. Ruth was a young woman willing to work, and the barley harvest offered her something to do.

**Her willingness to work and her faithful service put her in the way of promotion and became a stepping-stone to a bright crown.**

Many are the instances in the Bible in which the doing of a humble thing faithfully led to unexpected results, and life is full of them. Saul went out to find his father's lost asses and he found a kingdom. Jesus went down into the water of baptism and the heavens opened above him and he heard his Father's voice.

Ruth the beautiful gleaner attracted the attention and awakened the love of the wealthy and honorable Boaz, the owner of the field, and in due time he made her his wife and installed her as queen of his home.

And when she had borne him a son and was the envy of the village, the women that had gossiped rather unpleasantly about Naomi in the days of her reduced circumstances were now very forward to claim friendship with her and were effusive in their attentions and flatteries, saying, "Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, and let his name be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him" (Chap. 4:14–15).

And they called the name of Ruth's child Obed: "he is the father of Jesse, the father of David."

Thus this Moabitess by her faith and faithfulness not only stepped into a position of affluence and honor, but she also became the great grandmother of David and stepped into royal ancestry and into the infinitely more illustrious lineage of the Saviour of the world.

Her crown is bright today and shines across all these centuries.

We never can tell where faithfulness is destined to go when it simply takes dutiful steps, however obscure and hard they may be. No one would have predicted or believed that the bars into that harvest field opened the way to a position prouder and more splendid than any queen's, but they did. Naomi's despondency was dissipated and Ruth's star began to rise the day she passed through the gate into that lowly service.

Get into your field of work, however humble it may be, and some blessed result will come. It may not be a crown of gold or of public honor, but it certainly will be a diadem of nobility and beauty in the soul itself. "Seest thou a man diligent in business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."

The soul that never slights a duty,
However irksome, strange or hard,
Will see at last the undimmed beauty
Of its reward.

## Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the time of the Judges.
2. Where was Moab and who were the Moabites?
3. What are some of the hardships of emigrants?
4. Give another instance in the Old Testament of the passionate devotion of two friends.
5. Why is Ruth so highly esteemed among Bible characters?
6. Give instances in American history of humble boyhood service that led to great renown.

# LESSON VI.—MAY 6

## SAMUEL: JUDGE AND PROPHET

### Samuel, a True Prophet

*Golden Text: Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth: for consider how great things he hath done for you.* I Sam. 12:24.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 33:1–9.

**Reference Material:** I Chron. 9:22; 29:29; Psalm 99:6; Jer. 15:1; Heb. 11:32–33.

***Lesson Passages: I Sam. 1:1–4:1; 7:3–10:27; 11:12–13:15; 15:1–16; 13; 25:1; 28:3–20***

***Lesson Text: I Samuel 12:1–5, 20–25***

And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.

2 And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and gray-headed; and, behold, my sons *are* with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.

3 Behold, here I *am:* witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received *any* bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand.

5 And he said unto them, The LORD *is* witness against you, and his anointed *is* witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they answered, *He is* witness.

20 ¶ And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart;

21 And turn ye not aside: for *then should ye go* after vain *things*, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they *are vain*.

22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

23 Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done for you.

25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Samuel's Defence of Himself.***

***2. Obedience and National Prosperity.***

***3. Disobedience and National Ruin.***
***4. A Penitent Appeal and a Gracious Response.***
***5. A Chosen People.***

We take up the story of Samuel near the end of his career. After the selection of Saul as king of Israel (chapter 10:20–27), there was an attack of the Ammonites upon Jabesh-gilead, which gave Saul a chance to show his mettle. He rallied the men of Israel, three hundred thousand strong, and hurled them against the invaders with such might as crushed them and sent the scattered remnants flying among their hills.

The victory instantly made a hero of Saul, and his supporters were so fired with loyalty that they wanted to put to death those who had opposed him. But Saul restrained their unwise zeal and piously ascribed the victory to the Lord.

**Nothing succeeds like success, and the man that does things will have no lack of followers and support.**

Samuel saw that the hour following the victory was the opportune time to renew the kingdom, and so he gathered the people together at Gilgal, where Saul was again invested with the office of king before the Lord.

The aged prophet then delivered his farewell address. He first reviewed his own administration as prophet and judge and received the approval of the people. He then rehearsed the national history from Egypt up to the inauguration of the kingdom and showed how the Lord had led and kept them, and how unfaithful they had often been in rebelling against him and in demanding a king.

### *1. Samuel's Defence of Himself*

Samuel at the end of his long public life makes a defence of himself, his *Apologia pro vita sua.* He recounts the story of how he had yielded to the demand of Israel for a king and reminds them that they now have what they wanted.

As for himself, he has walked among them since his childhood and his life was to them an open book. He boldly challenges any one to say a word against him or point to any wrong deed of his. He has taken no one's ox or ass or "even a pair of shoes," as the Septuagint Version has it. He invites the most searching scrutiny and calls upon the Lord himself to bear witness to his words.

"And they answered, He is witness." His bold challenge met with the instant support of the people and his administration received a unanimous vote of approval and confidence. Few are the public men, kings, prime ministers and presidents, who could successfully put through such a challenge and stand such pitiless publicity.

Samuel was not in the habit of boasting, but now that he was laying down the reins of office and about to retire to private life for his few declining years, he was justified in vindicating his record and leaving it so clear that no future aspersions could be cast upon it.

There are times when men, especially public men, have a right to establish their integrity beyond the power of evil minded persons to bring it into doubt. Paul did this in his defence before his enemies (Acts 22:1–21), and Jesus himself boldly challenged his opponents to convince him of sin (John 8:46). But no one can successfully issue such a challenge who has not a clear record both in public and in private life.

**We ought every one to live such lives and build such characters and leave such records that we can fearlessly throw open the books and defy any one to say a word against us.**

### *2. Obedience and National Prosperity*

Samuel now pointed the people to the king whom they had asked for and whom the Lord had set over them. The same fact thus has a human and a divine side; and while the human side was in a degree mixed with error and guilt, yet the divine side was none the less truth and wisdom.

**The desire of Israel for a king was the choice of the lower good in the presence of the higher ideal, and yet God granted it as being the best thing in their condition of heart.**

Having chosen a king, it was the duty of the people to make the best of him. The prophet lays down the conditions that will bring political strength and prosperity. If they will fear the Lord and hearken unto his voice and not rebel against his commandments it shall be well with them.

**Are not these the conditions of political prosperity today? The strength of a nation is not in its armies and warships, but in the righteousness of its people.**

**The commandments of God are the laws of life, national as well as individual, and in keeping of them there is great national reward.**

It is important to observe that the king himself is brought under the same obligation to keep these conditions as the people (verse 14). There is not one law for him and another for them, but both king and people are equally in subjection to the King of kings.

**Kings are not above the laws they administer, but they also are under them and must obey them.**

The king must rule himself before he can rule others; he must keep his own laws and show himself an example, and then he can command the obedience of his subjects. Men invested with great power, whether of high, office or of great wealth, are often disposed to think that they have special liberty and license and can break laws that other men must keep.

**But there is no such liberty among men, and the greatest has upon him the same obligation as the least; in fact; the higher one is in position and power the greater is the need that he keep all the laws of God. He is the true prophet and statesman who tells his people the truth and leads them in the way of righteousness.**

### *3. Disobedience and National Ruin*

Over against the blessing of obedience to the Lord is set the consequences of rebellion against him. If they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord, the hand of the Lord would be against them as it was against their fathers. This is the necessary obverse side of the blessings of obedience that confirms its worth.

**If obedience and rebellion reaped the same harvest, there would be no inducement to obey, all moral distinctions would fade out, and the universe would forfeit our respect.**

Rebellion must reap retribution where obedience reaps blessing, or there is no difference between them that we need regard. But God has put an eternal difference between right and wrong, and all the voices of his Word and his world utter the testimony: Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with them: Say to the wicked, It shall be ill with them.

The hand of the Lord is against them that disobey him. The same hand that is outstretched to receive the returning prodigal and tender to bind up the broken-hearted and mighty to save, is just as mighty to strike down the proud heart and rebellious soul.

**All of God's laws work for those that keep them and against those that disobey them, just as gravitation will serve us or crush us according to the way in which we treat it.**

The Lord will be against those that disobey him as he was against their fathers. His retribution is not a surprise he springs on us, but it has been at work a long time in the world, and we need look back no further than our fathers to see its sure working and bitter results. The whole past is full of warning that should restrain us from disobedience in the present.

**History is a great graveyard of nations that forgot God and then went into the dust of oblivion, and our nation has no special license to violate the conditions of national perpetuity and must also reap what it sows.**

**If we disregard the rights of other nations in our strength and pride or let inner purity and integrity decline into social corruption, we are digging our own grave and our doom is sure.**

### *4. A Penitent Appeal and a Gracious Resonse*

The penitent cries of the people received a gracious response. "Fear not: ye have indeed done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart."

**Fear not—how often is this kindly greeting sounded out in the Bible. It rings through the Old Testament, and it is also the first word of the gospel in the New.**

The fear of the human soul is rooted in its sin. Its own heart condemns it, and it knows that God is greater than its heart. But God is not an unjust judge or blind fate that hears the cry of the penitent in vain; his heart is compassion and he will hear and forgive and save,

If we turn to him in faith and fellowship there is nothing in him that we need fear, but we shall find his lovingkindness better than life. Then also

will the whole universe be friendly and we shall be safe and need have no fear anywhere.

Yet our not fearing the Lord depends on our not turning aside from following him. If we go with him we shall find him all kindness and love, but if we go against him we shall find him a consuming fire.

"Turn ye not aside," says the prophet again and again, for he knew how inclined the Israelites were to forsake his way; and we need constantly to watch our steps and see that we do not turn aside.

"For then ye shall go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain." When the Israelites turned away from the Lord they turned to idols, which are "emptinesses" or nothings: they have in them no power or abiding reality at all.

**Is this not equally true of the things to which we turn when we turn away from the Lord? Wealth, fashion, pleasure—what are these but nothings in the end? Scepticism, unbelief, agnosticism—are these anything substantial and satisfying to the soul?**

**Before we turn away from God, let us look whither we are going. "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."**

### *5. A Chosen People*

The prophet assured the people of Israel that the Lord would not forsake them: "because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people." All people are the Lord's, but they are not all his in the same sense or degree: he has chosen some unto himself. There are roots to this fact that we cannot reach, but the fact itself stands unshakable in God's Word and in his world.

**Because he has chosen them he will keep them, and no man shall pluck them out of his hand.**

The prophet also assures the people that he will not cease to pray for them. It is worth something to have a good man pray for us: this gives us a standing in heaven that we might not otherwise attain; and the very consciousness that a saintly father or mother or pastor or teacher was praying for him has restrained many a wanderer and brought him home.

**Let us not forget to pray for one another and thus bind ourselves to God with as many ties as possible.**

The prophet would instruct the people in the good and right way. Prayer must never be separated from instruction: we should pray for the right way, and then we should try to find it through proper means.

**"The good and the right way"—these two things always go together: the good is always the right way, and the right is always the good way.**

Once more the prophet admonishes the people to fear the Lord and serve him with all the heart. They were a chosen people, but this would not save them in their sins.

**We must not flatter ourselves that we are chosen of the Lord and then do wickedly, or we shall be consumed in our folly.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give a summary of Samuel's life and work.
2. How was Saul chosen king of Israel?
3. When should we defend ourselves?
4. How does righteousness strengthen a nation?
5. How does personal and social injustice weaken a nation?
6. How can we know that we are chosen of the Lord?

# LESSON VII.—MAY 13

## DAVID, THE POET-KING

### Lessons from the Life of David

*Golden Text: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* Psalm 23:6.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 1.

**Reference Material:** Psalm 51; Isa. 9:7; Jer. 33:15–26; Luke 1:32; Acts 2:29–34; 4:25.

***Lesson Passages: I Sam. 16:1–31:13; II Sam. 1:1–24: 25; I Kings 1:1–2:12***

***Lesson Text: I Samuel 16:1–13***

And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2 And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear *it*, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

3 And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me *him* whom I name unto thee.

4 And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Beth-lehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6 ¶ And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed *is* before him.

7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the Lord seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

10 Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.

11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all *thy* children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy, *and* withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this *is* he.

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

## LESSON PLAN

*Introduction.*

1. ***Excessive Mourning Restrained.***
2. ***An Alarming Commission.***
3. ***A Promising yet Rejected Son.***
4. ***The Last Shall be First.***
5. ***The Roots of David's Greatness.***

David, shepherd boy, soldier and king, poet and man, will ever be dear to the Christian world. As shepherd boy he is attractive and winsome in person and character and his adventure with Goliath is one of the most famous stories of literature and is one thing in the Bible that almost every boy knows.

As soldier and king he was valiant and won notable victories and raised his throne to great power and prestige in the ancient world. As poet he sang some of the sweetest religious lyrics in any language and they are still singing their way through the world, and he ranks among the world's eminent poets.

And as a man David was so human, compounded of great strength mingled with emotional weakness, a mixture of flame and flesh, of genius and tears, and he fell so deeply and yet repented so passionately that he is ever dear to the Christian heart that finds its own experiences vividly depicted on the pages of his life.

After the affair of the Amalekites (chapter 15:1–35), Samuel and Saul parted and "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death." The king then went to Gibeah and soon after Samuel was called upon to annoint a successor.

### *1. Excessive Mourning Restrained*

The Lord remonstrated against Samuel's excessive mourning over the unfaithful and deposed king. It was natural and right that the prophet should grieve over the tragic turn of affairs. He had anointed Saul in his strength and beauty and had had a fatherly interest and pride in him; he had seen the splendid promise of his youth and had expected of him great things.

Saul's failure to fulfill these promises and his fall had filled the prophet with disappointment and sorrow. He retired to his home in Ramah and brooded over his grief.

Such grief is apt to grow morbid and melancholy. Sorrow has its rights, but it may go too far; and when it leads us into despondency and neglect of duty, sorrow becomes a sin.

The Lord called Samuel out of his grief. He first gave the prophet a new thought to lift him out of trouble, a higher view of the case, "the expulsive power of a new affection." "I have rejected him." This relieved Samuel from further responsibility and removed the case from the range of human criticism. The Lord's work standeth sure and is not subject to our judgment.

Our mourning should never amount to a complaint against him and his righteous judgments should beget in us a spirit of submission and silence. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it."

Next the Lord gave the mourning prophet something to do: he was to fill his horn with oil and go to Bethlehem.

Sitting down with a sorrow is the worst thing we can do with it and for it and only deepens the gloom. Activity brings blessed relief, and duty is the best comforter. Often our only salvation in trouble is to get away from it and go to work.

Especially does it help us in trouble to do good to others. In anointing others we heal our own wounds.

Then the Lord imparted to Samuel a great secret and hope: "for I have provided me a king." In rejecting Saul the Lord was not forgetting to look ahead and to take care of the consequences. The kingdom should not fail because of the unfaithful king. The prophet need not fear for the future, for the Lord had arranged for that, and all things should come out right.

"I have rejected" and "I have provided" are thus the two sides of the Lord's providence, the two hands with which he works. While with the one hand he was casting off Saul, with the other he was reaching after David.

All the losses that God inflicts upon us are matched with much greater gains.

### *2. An Alarming Commission*

Samuel received the commission with some alarm. Saul was now becoming a desperate character, and if he heard of Samuel's taking steps to anoint a successor, he would not hesitate to kill the prophet. Samuel stated the hard situation to the Lord and received directions how to slip through the duty without danger.

> **Danger is never to be courted, and we are to manage even our duties with such prudence as will avoid unnecessary complications.**

The prophet was to take a heifer with him to Bethlehem and announce that he was come to sacrifice, which would act as a cover to his deeper purpose and prevent any rumor from reaching Saul. This looks like a shrewd device, and so it was, but it was strictly true and contained no element of falsity; it was the truth, though not the whole truth.

> **We are not bound to reveal all our purposes, especially when such disclosure might be to turned to wrong ends.**
>
> **We may conceal much, but we may never conceal a falsehood, and the one thing we may never do is to tell a lie.**

Samuel was to proceed to Bethlehem, and there the Lord would show him what to do next; his duty was made plain up to a certain point, and when he had obeyed that far he would receive further directions.

> **This is a deep principle of the divine providence, and it is thus that God is ever leading us on. We must not ask to see the distant scene: one step ahead is enough.**

Samuel was afraid to go to Bethlehem, and now the people of Bethlehem were afraid of Samuel. The shadow of Saul's jealousy and madness was over all the land, and everybody was afraid.

> **Bad rulers shake the foundations of society.**

The people may also have feared the prophet's judgment. But Samuel came peaceably, and he sanctified the people and called them to sacrifice.

**The preacher and teacher should not come to excite fear, or stir up strife, but to call the people to worship and to pronounce upon them the peace of God.**

### *3. A Promising yet Rejected Son*

After the public sacrifice, Samuel partook of the customary feast with Jesse and his sons. It had been revealed to Samuel before he came that one of these sons was to be anointed as king, and now the question on which great destinies trembled was, Which one? The father presented his eldest son, evidently thinking that he had the first right to and the best chance for the great honor.

There stood the youth, tall and handsome, gifted and promising, and Samuel thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." Samuel had been captivated once before (chap. 10:24) by outward appearances, and now he seemed ready to repeat the blunder.

But the Lord interposed with truer principles of judgment. The son that the fond father and short-sighted prophet would have selected the Lord had refused, for he saw that he was not the man for the place. Outward appearances were for him, but inward realities were against him.

Our judgments of people very often stop at the surface and are based on form and features, dress and manners, wealth and position. Such judgments are scarcely skin deep and may totally miss the real man. They often lead us into unjust and cruel treatment of others and into ridiculous or tragic mistakes.

**Outward appearances put many people into wrong places and are responsible for many misfits and failures.**

**God sees deeper and looks into the heart. All the outward trappings and pageantry with which men put on appearances and cover up their real selves are transparent tissues before the omniscient gaze of the Lord.**

**In every man there are at least three men: the man he thinks himself to be, the man others think him to be, and the man he really is; and this last man is truly known only by the Lord.**

### *4. The Last Shall Be First*

Seven sons of Jesse passed before Samuel and each in turn was rejected. The future king was not among them and the situation was growing per-

plexing. Samuel asked, "Are here all thy children?" The father answered that there yet remained the youngest and that he was keeping the sheep. Apparently the youngest boy was not invited to the feast as not being a possible candidate for the honor and was sent off to keep the flocks.

**Nobody thought he had any chance, and he was put out of the way and forgotten. Eliab was the man for the place and David was not to be thought of: let him stay with his sheep.**

But Samuel thought otherwise and must have startled the company as he said, "Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither." So the boy was brought in. He was seen to be of ruddy complexion and had beautiful eyes, a handsome and attractive youth.

But Samuel was not now judging by appearances and had a surer voice to guide him. "And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he." So the first was last and the last was first. Men were all wrong in their judgments, and only the Lord knew the right man for the crown. The seekers after the place missed it and the one that never thought of it was called to it.

Many a boy brought up in the lowliest rank and service has risen to the proudest heights among men, whether in statesmanship and war, or in literature and science and art, and their names crowd the pages of fame. Even now many a boy is a keeper of sheep who will one day be a king of men.

**Ruling over sheep is good training for ruling over men, the humblest service prepares for the highest. The boy who is faithfully doing hard work knows not for what high position he may be at school, and his call may unexpectedly come.**

The Lord looked into David's heart and saw in him kingly powers in the bud.

**God sees the possibilities that lie folded up in us and he will call us to such service as will give these possibilities an opportunity to unfold. Every soul has a kingdom in itself and is called to win a more than royal crown.**

### *5. The Roots of David's Greatness*

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day for-

ward." David had kingly powers in him, but it took divine influences to develop them. The seeds are in the soil, pregnant with all the bloom and fruitage of the garden and orchard, but the rain must fall and the sun must shine upon them out of heaven to make them sprout and unfold into all their latent glory.

**It takes two worlds to make a tree: the earth beneath and the sun above. It takes two worlds to build a man: earth and heaven, human and divine coöperation.**

Whatever David attained in after years of noble character and disciplined power, whatever strength and splendor he gave to the kingdom of Israel, whatever lofty and rich poetry he wrote for the comfort and inspiration of the world, grew out of that divine endowment which he received when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. We may have in us rare gifts and possibilities, but they will come to naught unless we receive power from on high.

**Here is the great cause of our weakness and barrenness. The seeds of human ability are slumbering in us, but they are not watered with divine grace, the roots of our lives are not saturated and enriched with the Holy Spirit, our lives are not hid with Christ in God.**

**The holy oil of consecration to the Lord must flow down over us, even to the skirts of our garments, every thought and imagination must be brought into subjection to his will, and then we shall begin to grow into his image and have kingly power from that day forward.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give an account of how Saul was called to the kingdom and why he failed.
2. What are some ways in which we can control and dispel our grief.
3. How far should we consult prudence in discharging dangerous duty?
4. What reasons had Jesse for thinking that his eldest son would be chosen for the kingship?
5. Give other instances in sacred and in profane history of youths who rose from humble conditions to high positions.
6. How may we have the Spirit of the Lord come upon us?

# LESSON VIII.—MAY 20

## ELIJAH, THE BRAVE REFORMER

### What Modern Reformers Can Learn from Elijah

*Golden Text: Choose you this day whom ye will serve.* Joshua 24:15.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 2.

**Reference Material:** Mal. 4:5-6; Matt. 11:14; 16:14, 17; 17: 3, 4, 10, 12; 27: 46-49; Luke 1:17; John 1:21–25; Rom. 11:2–4; James 5:17–18.

***Lesson Passages: I Kings 17:1–19; 21:1–29; II Kings 1:1–2:12***

***Lesson Text: I Kings 18:30–39***

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down.

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do *it* the second time. And they did *it* the second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

36 And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that* I *am* thy servant, and *that* I have done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

1. ***Pitiful Failure of the Prophets of Baal.***
2. ***The True Altar Set Up.***
3. ***The Prayer of the Prophet of Jehovah.***
4. ***Lightning from Heaven.***
5. ***The Tragic End of the False Prophets.***

Drouth had done its work in burning the land barren and the sorely chastened people were ready to listen to a true prophet. The false worship of Baal had run its course and shown its impurity and impotency, and the time had come to make a bold bid to Israel to forsake the idolatrous worship and return to the true worship of Jehovah. The famine was a seed sowing that was to yield a great harvest of faith.

Elijah was ordered out of his retreat into active service. The prophet met the king and repelled the charge of being the troubler of Isarel and hurled the charge back upon Ahab himself.

Elijah now proposed to Ahab a trial of the relative truth and power of the worship of Baal and the worship of Jehovah. The four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal were to place a bullock on an altar and pray to their God to consume it with fire, and Elijah was to do the same: "and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

**This test was fair and conclusive and was in accordance with the ideas of the age.**

### *1. Pitiful Failure of the Prophets of Baal*

The central mountain range that runs up through Palestine like a spinal column, when it comes to the plain of Esdraelon, turns to the northwest, plunges seaward and buries its rocky roots in the blue Mediterranean. On the top of this giant altar the grand trial took place. The summit at one point is a broad plateau, in full view on every side of distant parts of the land, and is set in a mighty frame of mountain, plain and sea, a vast amphitheater apparently built for just such a solemn and momentous spectacle. Close to its base flows the Kishon, and on its slope is a mountain pool that persists through the severest drouth.

On the appointed day a great multitude assembled, and the trial was on. The prophets of Baal, secure in their false obsession, built the pile of wood, put their bullock upon it and began to call upon their god.

**It is pathetic to this day to read of their vain efforts.**

All day long they cried ceaselessly, and in their frenzy leaped and cut themselves with knives, while Elijah mocked them, and with keen irony taunted their helpless god.

But no answer came; the heavens had no tongue of flame for such faith.

False religions have been given full time and opportunity to show what they can do. What has any form of pagan worship, or of materialism or pantheism, done that indicates that God is with them? Where is the country they have cleansed and uplifted, the souls they have saved, the fire they have drawn from heaven? Superstition and unbelief have no divine fire that can burn away a single sin.

### *2. The True Altar Set Up*

The false prophets fell back from their impotent altar and Elijah now stepped forth. His time was come. The sun was westering and its level rays glowed on Carmel's crown. The false prophets ceased their clamant cries, a hush fell upon the multitude and Elijah spoke. He called the people to come near, and the circle of the throng presssed closer.

What he was about to do was not to be shrouded in any form of secrecy or mystery, but was to be open to the closest and keenest inspection.

He then repaired the altar of the Lord that was thrown down, probably one of the altars of Jehovah destroyed by Jezebel.

Repairing the ruined altar of the Lord is a good way to begin a reform. The nation that has forgotten God must take its first right step by returning to his altar. A weakened and distracted church may find the cause of its trouble in a fallen and forgotten altar. A neglected family altar is the root of the weakness and worldliness of many a Christian home.

Repair your altar and make it strong and beautiful in the worship of the Lord.

In rebuilding the altar Elijah took twelve stones, symbolizing the twelve tribes to whom God had given the name Israel. This act was a silent but significant and eloquent appeal to the unity of the nation that lay deeper than the unhappy division that had disrupted the tribes. In this supreme trial the prophet would have the divided nation unified in the worship of its one true and living God. This appeal would touch a deep rich chord in the

hearts of the people and wake the music of the old days and the ancient glory.

**In repairing a fallen altar, be sure that you also repair strained relations and broken fellowships. Heal your divisions and strifes at the altar and be of one mind.**

**A family or church can worship better at an altar in which every member is represented by a stone or symbol of his presence.**

Elijah dug a trench around the altar, put wood on the stones and a bullock on the wood, and then poured jar after jar of water over it all until it was drenched and saturated and the trench was full. Why was this? To shut out the possibility of deception and fraud, which were then craftily practiced in connection with such affairs. Elijah would show the people beyond doubt that there was no cheat in it and that the fire came, not from earth, but from heaven.

**Christianity did not originate in a hidden corner, but out in the open under the sky; and it has no cunningly devised fables and clever tricks with which to deceive the world, but it blazons its reality by many infallible proofs in pitiless publicity.**

**It subjects itself to the severest tests and fears not the most searching investigation. Its fire never could have been kindled on earth, but must be a burning coal dropped from the altar of heaven.**

### *3. The Prayer of the Prophet of Jehovah*

All things were now ready and Elijah made his appeal unto God. At the time of the evening sacrifice the prophet drew near and his solemn voice floated far out over the multitude. It is one of the greatest and most effective prayers in the Bible.

"Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel," he began, "let it be known this day, that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again."

The prayer is inspired in its language and logic, concentrated and definite in its aim, pure in its purpose and mighty in its appeal and power. After the insensate cries of the false prophets, it must have fallen on the silent and

awed multitude like a solemn majestic strain of music, awakening thoughts and memories that were too deep for tears.

In appealing to the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel," he aroused the national consciousness of the past and set these potent personages to praying with him; all the mighty dead crowded their supplications into his cry.

> In our prayers we appeal to the "God of our fathers," and take our stand upon his faithfulness to past generations, and thus we turn all the voices of the dead and all the centuries of history into one mighty prayer.

Elijah's prayer was definite and pointed in its aim; he did not run and ramble around the universe but at once came to his subject and sharpened it into a point.

> Our prayers are often split into too many petitions and wander around in aimless vagueness. We do not pray as we ought because we do not know what we want and still less what we need.

The prophet had an intense consciousness of one need and concentrated his purpose into one petition. His one petition was that God should be glorified in making Israel know him as their God, and Elijah as his servant, and in turning the heart of the people back to himself.

> There was nothing selfish, small and short-lived in this prayer, but it was cast upon large lines and looked straight away from human selfishness and vanity to divine glory manifesting itself in human blessing.
>
> Our prayers must not seize upon petty personal points, but lay hold of large things and aim at divine ideals, and then we may come to pray with a prophet's passion and power.

### *4. Lightning from Heaven*

As lightning out of a cloudless sky fell the fire from heaven and burnt the offering and the wood, cracked and pulverized the stones, and licked the water and the very dust out of the trench. The spectacular event had an overwhelming effect upon the people, who fell on their faces and cried "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God."

**This supernatural answer to prayer becomes natural and easy of belief when it is set in the frame of its national environment and spiritual purpose.**

A great crisis in the history of the chosen people called for and justified an extraordinary manifestation of the divine presence and power in order to save the world from the degradation of sensual idolatry. Thus fell the immoral and shameless worship of a heathen god in Israel, and thus the chosen people were recovered to the true and pure worship.

**Christianity has its mighty works that attest its divine origin and its Lord is declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead. It has its fire from heaven and cleanses everything it touches into whiteness.**

If it has not yet burned deep enough into our civilization and even into Christian hearts to work out its full measure of purity, this is because it takes a long time for so great a transformation to be accomplished. It will at last burn this sin-saturated world to ashes and create a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

**Unbelief has no good fruit to show, never forgave a sin or comforted a sorrowing soul or planted a flower of hope on a grave, but Christian faith asks to be known by its fruits, and millions attest its blessed saving power.**

### *5. The Tragic End of the False Prophets*

The great trial had a tragic ending that was also in accordance with the ideas of that primitive age. At Elijah's command the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal were hurried down to the plain and the Kishon was crimsoned with their blood; not one of them escaped.

Is this the way to deal with false prophets? That depends. Governments in the Great War did not hesitate to imprison and even put to death men that were playing false to their country and giving comfort and aid to the enemy. Authorities cannot be too nice about the way they deal with traitors, by whatever name they call themselves or even however conscientious they may be, who yet in effect stab in the back the men who are going out to lay down their lives in defense of liberty and right.

Rough occasions may still demand rough usage. When life is at stake we do not hesitate to use any right means that are necessary to a righteous end.

On this principle we may justify Elijah for his procedure on this occasion. These false prophets were no ordinary heretics exercising their rightful liberty of thought and conscience, but were grossly immoral men who by their teaching and practice were fatally corrupting both the church and the nation. Elijah thought it was necessary that they should die in order that Israel might live as a nation and propagate true religion in the world.

Nevertheless this way of dealing with false prophets in religion has been outgrown. Our lines are fallen in a more advanced stage of moral development when rational measures are efficient and sufficient for the overthrow of error. We may now only wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of truth. Death for heresy has had its day, and our victories are spiritual and not carnal.

But we still have false prophets and some of them are as unclean in their doctrines and deeds as the votaries of Baal. They swarm in heathen countries and infest Christian lands and especially cities, and they imperil our morals and religion and whole social fabric. Shallow and foolish people that are ready to run after every self-styled prophet are especially susceptible to their wiles.

We also have great vices and cancers and social injustices in our Christian world which we must ever fight as we would fight the very devil himself. We must put on the whole armor of God against these evils and quit ourselves in this battle like men and good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics:

1. Give an account of the events leading to this great trial.
2. How far can natural calamities such as famine be interpreted as divine discipline?
3. What false prophets are carrying on their propaganda in our day? How should we meet their wiles?
4. How can we set up an altar in our lives?
5. What are some good points in effectual prayer?
6. What can modern reformers learn from Elijah?

# LESSON IX.—MAY 27

## ISAIAH, THE STATESMAN PROPHET

### Isaiah, the Statesman-Prophet

*Golden Text: Here am I; send me.* Isaiah 6:8.

**Devotional Reading:** Isaiah 12.

**Reference Material:** II Chron. 26:22; 32:20, 32; Isa. 1:5; 7:1–17; 8:1–4, 16–18; 9:1–7; 11:1–10; 28–31; 36:1–39:8.

***Lesson Passages: II Kings 13:13–20:19; Isaiah 1:1; 6:1–13***

***Lesson Text: Isaiah 6:1–8***

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.
2 Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.
3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.
4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.
5 ¶ Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.
6 Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:
7 And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.
8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***
***1. The Vision in the Temple.***
***2. A Smitten Prophet.***
***3. A Cleansed Prophet.***
***4. The Divine Call for Human Help.***
***5. An Unexpected Message.***
***6. A Terrible Prospect.***

Little is known of the life of Isaiah, but he flames out as one of the greatest religious geniuses and poet-prophets in the Bible and in the history of the world. He lived in Jerusalem and his ministry extended through four reigns

and a period of sixty years. He began in the reign of Uzziah when Judah was enjoying a high degree of material prosperity.

This outward splendor, however, was only thin gilding that concealed inward corruption, and the faithless nation was already staggering towards its fall. Isaiah saw the falseness and rottenness of prince and priest and people and spared them not.

In the first five chapters of this book he holds up the mirror to his time and shows us a terrible reflection.

> The last part of the third chapter is a perfect picture of Parisian fashion and frivolity and falsity, and the whole discourse has a modern tone and squarely strikes the sins of today. Through these clouds of guilt shoot lightning flashes of wrath and retribution.
>
> In the sixth chapter the prophet gives us his divine call and mission, the heavenly vision which, like that of Paul, transfigured his life and inspired him for heroic service and suffering.

### *1. The Vision in the Temple*

Isaiah saw his vision in a temple. That is a good place in which to see visions.

> Down in the dust and competition of the market-place, or out in the whirl of society, we are not likely to see any ideal that will transfigure life. But in the house of worship messages are heard and aspirations kindled that lift us far above this world and give life new meaning.

The prophet saw the Lord upon his throne, his rightful place, where he always has been and will be, the central and supreme ruler of the world. His train filled the temple, the royal robes of his glory flowed out from him through all its precincts.

Seraphim hovered around him, veiling their feet and faces with their wings to express their reverence and to shield themselves from the intolerable splendor and using a third pair of wings to fly as ministering spirits everywhere at the divine bidding.

> Man is the top of this world, but not of all worlds: far above him in the unseen world are bright spirits that flock close to the throne of God and burn with glory.

What was the character of this mysterious Person that the prophet saw so exalted and splendid? On this everything depends. A ruler of the universe that is only a "Veiled Being" or "Unknowable Power" is not only unsatisfying to the heart but is really terrible to contemplate.

The prophet saw something more attractive and satisfying. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

Holy character—that is his true crown and glory: now let him reign; the universe is safe. Infinite wisdom, power and splendor, add these up and they do not make God; add love, and still the sun is incomplete; add justice and purity and truth, holiness of character, and now we have God.

This was the vision that the prophet saw and that lifted him to a new plane of being and transfigured his life.

**Poor and pitiful, low and squat upon the earth, is the life that has no vision to exalt and transform it with heavenly meaning; lofty and rich and strong is the soul that has wings of faith and aspiration on which to rise and soar in the celestial blue.**

### *2. A Smitten Prophet*

The prophet was instantly smitten with a sense of sin. "Woe is me!" he cried, "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

He did not go out from that vision filled with vanity and pride because of what he had seen, separating himself by his privilege from other men, but he humbled himself in the dust.

**This is the proper effect of special privilege and power. It is an awful thing to see the holy God, Father of us all, and then look with a sense of superiority and contempt upon our fellow men. Instead of exalting us in pride above others such a privilege should humble us and draw us closer to them.**

Why was the prophet seized with a sense of sin? No word of condemnation had been spoken to him, the Lord had not cast upon him an angry and threatening glance, not the least allusion had been made to his lips that now seemed to him to be clogged with uncleanness. "For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts": that was the reason.

The mere vision of the Lord had made his sense of sin vivid, the splendor

of the divine holiness had revealed and intensified the specks and spots of his human guilt. In the night all defects and discolorations are concealed: the sun brings them to light and discloses their deformity.

**We need only to step into the presence of God and become keenly conscious of the whiteness of his holiness to see how stained and saturated with sin we are.**

**In the presence of Jesus no word of condemnation need be spoken, our own heart condemns us, and we can only cry, "God be merciful to me the sinner."**

### *3. A Cleansed Prophet*

How was the prophet's cry of uncleanness received? Did a holy angel smite him down or a flash of the Lord's anger consume him? No, swift as a beam of light a seraph flew with a burning coal from the altar, and, touching the prophet's mouth with it, said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged."

**The prophet's sin was not denied or even palliated: his guilty conscience told him the truth; he was unfit for that holy presence.**

Yet he was not dealt with as his sin deserved and thrust into outer darkness, but his penitential guilt was forgiven and burned away. Those unclean lips were cleansed and made vocal with pure speech expressing holy thoughts. The prophet was here so close to God that the intermediary ritual of the temple was done away and the cleansing fire of sacrifice was applied immediately to his lips.

**God is a consuming fire against sin, and yet if we are penitent his fire will burn our sin away and leave us unharmed but purified. All that stay in his presence must be assimilated into the likeness of his holiness, and the blood of Jesus Christ will work this blessed change.**

The prophet's lips were the instrument of his ministry, and there it seemed to him that all his guilt was congested, and therefore they were cleansed. The lips are a fine and full expression of our whole nature; there our guilt gathers, and there it must be cleansed away.

Few habits are more significant of deep-seated vileness than foul speech, few sins worse than unclean lips; and no habit is more expressive of good character and is a more beautiful accomplishment than pure and choice diction.

The Scriptures frequently put the greatest emphasis upon our speech, telling us that the tongue may be a world set on fire of hell, and that we shall give account for every idle word we speak.

On the other hand, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle his whole body." "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in network of silver."

### *4. The Divine Call for Human Help*

The prophet now heard a voice calling for volunteers for service. "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

The Lord needs human beings to go for him and do his work, the Creator needs his creatures, Omnipotence needs the help of finite weakness. The steam must have its cylinder, the river its channel and the electric current its conducting wire. Jesus on one occasion needed and sent for a colt, the Lord of glory in his triumphal procession rode on an ass.

God has power enough, but he needs conductors.

The divine logic runs: "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." God has many tasks waiting to be done, in the field and factory, business and the professions, home and school and state and church, all of these converging upon the one supreme work of building his kingdom in the world, and to this service we are called.

All useful human work is divine and helps God.

We are not drafted into servitude, but are called as volunteers into free service.

Immediately after he was pardoned and purified, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord, and it will not be long after we have experienced pardoning grace that we shall hear the call to service.

Any one who cannot hear this call must have his hearing dulled with worldliness and sin; but the purified soul hears it clear and strong.

"Here am I; send me," instantly responded the prophet. His vibrant soul answered back quick and clear as a struck bell.

All great souls have this quality of immediate response and unquestioning obedience, going forth, like Abraham, not knowing whither they go; asking not to see the distant scene; one step enough at a time.

Not until we simply hear the voice of the Lord and commit ourselves to his will and way shall we find power and patience and peace. We are saved to serve, and only in our service shall we fulfil our mission and reap the full reward of the Christian life.

### *5. An Unexpected Message*

The prophet was now given his message and an unexpected mission it was; not a flattering speech that would bring him popularity and power, but a hard saying that would bring him persecution and death. The message was, "Go, and tell this people. Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes."

This, of course, was not to be Isaiah's literal message to the people, as his prophecies show, but rather describes the outcome of his preaching. Light that softens one substance hardens another, and truth that saves a receptive and responsive soul, when rejected by a wilfully disobedient soul, will dull the ears and blind the eyes and make the last state worse than the first.

This fateful principle lies at the root of some of the most fearful warnings of God's Word, and it is the explanation of this strange message to the prophet.

God, knowing the blinding destroying effect of the prophet's preaching, virtually said to him, "Go on with your ministry; tell your message though it makes the heart of the people fat and shuts their eyes." For the truth must continue to be preached though we know that men will turn it to their own destruction.

We know that education will be perverted to evil uses by some of the scholars, and yet we keep on imparting knowledge; and in time of war the government calls upon all citizens to support the country in its death-struggle though it knows that some disloyal men will turn traitors to their own destruction.

**God will let his light shine upon us, though we shut our eyes to it and at last bring upon ourselves total blindness and everlasting night.**

### *6. A Terrible Prospect*

The prophet shrank back from such a message and instinctively cried, "Lord, how long?" and the answer came, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without a man, and the land be utterly desolate."

This was a terrible prospect that was opened before his vision, but he now knew what to expect, the worst was now branded upon his soul.

**His was to be no easy path of success and applause, but one of darkness and devastation and at its end a cross, even as Jesus marched towards his cross from the beginning of his ministry.**

Yet beyond the end, which was the impending captivity, was seen a gleam of light and hope. The tree was to be cut down again and again, but it was a tree "whose stock remaineth," and "the holy seed is the stock thereof." After the axe and the fire "a remnant shall remain," and henceforth this was the prophet's sustaining faith and hope.

**God has often cut his unfaithful people down to the root, but there has always remained a faithful seed that has again sprouted and bloomed. Things never get so bad with us that there is not some remaining good that may grow a new harvest of blessing.**

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS:

1. What do we know about the life and character and genius of Isaiah?
2. In what ways may we see divine visions?
3. Why are the purest souls the most sensitive to their sin?
4. Give other Bible teachings showing God must have our help.
5. Show that we must keep on teaching truth however it may be received.
6. What hope always remains in the darkest situation?

# LESSON X.—JUNE 3

## JEREMIAH, THE PROPHET OF COURAGE

### Jeremiah's Service to His Nation

*Golden Text: Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.* I Cor. 16:13.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 94:16–23.

**Reference Material:** Jer. 9:1–9; 13:1–9; 16:1–4; 17:19–27; 19:1–10; 22:13–19; 31:15, 31–34; Matt. 2:17–18; 16:14.

***Lesson Passages: Jeremiah 1:1–10; 7:1–15; 20:1–6; 21; 26; 32; 35: 1–19; 36; 37; 39; 42; 43***

***Lesson Text: Jeremiah 35:5–14, 18–19***

5 And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.
6 But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, *neither* ye, nor your sons for ever:
7 Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have *any:* but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye *be* strangers.
8 Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives our sons, nor our daughters;
9 Nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed:
10 But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.
11 But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.
12 ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,
13 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD.
14 The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.

18 ¶ And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you;
19 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

## LESSON PLAN

*Introduction.*

1. ***The Rechabites.***
2. ***The Testing of the Rechabites.***
3. ***The Loyalty of the Rechabites.***
4. ***The Judgment upon Judah.***
5. ***The Reward of the Rechabites.***

Jeremiah was one of the last of the prophets of Judah and saw it go down into capivity to the Babylonians in the final fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. He was himself soon after carried into Egypt and is not heard of again. It was his fate to be a lonely, misunderstood, intensely unpopular and bitterly hated and persecuted prophet, and he was thrown into a horrible dungeon from which he narrowly escaped with his life.

Bits of autobiography are scattered through his writings in which we are given glimpses of his call (1:2–10), his mission (1:11–19), his anxious sympathies (4:19; 8:18), his awestruck sense of Jehovah's power (4:23–26), his lonely sorrows (15:10–21), and the divine compulsion that sustained him (20:7–18). In his Lamentations he pours out his soul in floods of grief and thus became known as the "weeping prophet."

He was unhappily called upon to prophesy against his own people and city and he predicted its fall under the Babylonians thundering at its gates and even advised surrender to them, which seemed to his compatriots clear and deep treason against his own country.

**In these times when all outward things were rushing into wreck Jeremiah put emphasis on personal, inward, spiritual religion, trust in God and obedience and submission to his will (7:4; 9:8; 31:31–34).**

The episode recorded in this lesson is dated "in the days of Jehoiakim" and gives us a leaf from the life of a family group of Jews who maintained their rustic simplicity of life and were loyal to their traditions and convictions in the midst of the growing luxury and degeneracy of the last days of Judah. Jeremiah, acting under divine direction, uses these people as an object lesson to degenerate Judah.

### *1. The Rechabites*

The Rechabites were a nomadic tribe of Kenite descent. In I Chron. 2:55 we read of "the Kenites that came of Hammath, the father of Rechab."

We meet with the Kenites in Canaan in the days of Abraham, Gen. 15:19, and Hammath probably was a place in Naphtali, where they had their seat.

The head of the tribe was Jonadab, the son of Rechab, Jer. 35:14, and it may be that "Rechab," which means a "rider," is not a personal name but a designation of the clan as horsemen of the desert.

The tribe was intimately associated with the Israelites, and its members were loyal worshipers of Jehovah. The Rechabites did not settle down on farms, with houses and vineyards; they lived in tents and roamed around in search of fresh pasture for their cattle and flocks. Their life and customs were simple and severe and marked them off in sharp contrast to the artificial and luxurious life of the inhabitants of the towns and cities.

**They were a primitive folk in the midst of a civilization materially progressive but morally decadent. They stood out as protestants against the degeneracy and profligacy of their age, the Puritans of their time.**

When the Chaldeans came in successive waves of invasion into Judea, they were driven to find refuge in Jerusalem. This led to the incident related in the lesson.

### *2. The Testing of the Rechabites*

Jeremiah used the Rechabites as an example to impress upon the unfaithful inhabitants of Jerusalem the fact of their growing guilt and impending doom. He called some Rechabites into the temple and set before them cups of wine and invited them to drink.

They were total abstainers, and the prophet did not wish them to break their conscientious custom and partake of the wine; he knew that they would not do so, and so he was not really endeavoring to lead them into evil.

**He was simply testing their loyalty to their own sense of duty, in order to use their faithfulness as a striking lesson for his own people.**

**It was a test and not a temptation to which he subjected them, so that in this act there was nothing blameworthy either in the prophet or in the Rechabites.**

This test to which Jeremiah subjected these primitive folk may be taken as illustrating the temptation to which we are exposed in our modern life.

We are immersed in a vast material civilization, which has its splendid achievements and advantages, but which is also mixed and tainted with manifold evils tempting us by worldly fashions and customs, excitements and pleasures, and especially by artificial stimulation of our nerves by intoxicants and drugs.

**Its wealth and luxury appeal to our appetites and ambition and cupidity and tempt us to resort to unrighteous means of obtaining these things.**

The wine cup is a fitting symbol of present-day temptations and is one of the most deadly dangers of our lives. Temptations are being constantly set before us in all their allurements and enticements, and every art and device of evil men is cunningly employed to lead us into their traps and ensnare us in body and in soul.

**The richer and more splendid the material civilization, the ranker is its soil out of which grow the scarlet blossoms and poisonous fruits of sin and vice, as ancient Babylon and Athens and Rome preach and prove in their swift decline and mournful ruins.**

**America is in special danger of this very fate and doom, for our wealth overtops and outshines any piles of gold ever heaped up by other peoples and is now the glittering attraction that draws and fixes and fascinates the gaze of the world.**

**Only by being true to the God of our fathers can we keep this wealth from luring us to moral relaxation and ruin.**

### *3. The Loyalty of the Rechabites*

To the test of the prophet the Rechabites gave a noble reply. "We will drink no wine," they said: "for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons forever. Neither shall ye build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us."

**The sincerity and firmness and loyalty to their ancestral faith which mark this refusal must elicit our unreserved admiration.**

In the midst of all the solicitations and pressure of the seductive city life in which they were temporarily immersed they would not in the least degree relax their simple and austere customs, and they nobly kept themselves unspotted. They were in the city and yet not of it.

**They were not afraid of being considered and derided as old fashioned and out of date in their primitive manners and were not ashamed to appeal to the authority and example of "our father." They were loyal to their own ancestral faith and life and were ready and proud to stand against the world.**

In this attitude they afford a worthy example for us. We are somewhat in their condition as we are solicited to yield to many temptations that are even more dangerous and deadly than theirs.

**It is well for us to be true to the teaching and example of our fathers.**

Let it be granted that we must have and obey our own convictions of truth and duty, yet we should consider that wisdom did not begin with us and that our fathers trod many paths that are safe for our feet, and safe because they broke the way for us. To disown their accumulated and tried wisdom in any department of life, most of all in the field of moral and spiritual truth, would be folly.

**It is not a sign of unmanly dependence and weakness to be loyal to the instruction and example of our fathers: rather, to disown them is rashness and ruin and to follow their steps is safe guidance and strength.**

We have the same power as the Rechabites to take a stand against evil and quit ourselves like men. In our personal customs and companionships, in business and in society, we can refuse to share in any practice, habit, or social custom that we believe to be wrong or attended with danger.

**However subtle and strong the solicitation and pressure that are put upon us, we can put our conscience and will against them and beat them back and trample them under our feet.**

Brave men have resisted these evil things unto blood; great souls have stood up against them like oaks against storms. What others have done, we can do. It is in our power to win this victory over the world. God will help us to do this thing.

There are many commands and promises in the Bible bidding us to fight this good fight and assuring us of the victory.

It is especially a bad sign in young people when they disregard and ridicule the instructions and ways of their fathers as old-fogyish, and it is a good sign when they honor father and mother, for then they are keeping the commandment that has a special promise attached to it and are walking in safe and victorious paths.

### *4. The Judgment upon Judah*

The prophet had accomplished his purpose in bringing the Rechabites into the temple. They had nobly stood the test of their public trial. Now he turned upon the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem in judgment. They had received instruction through many prophets through many generations.

"Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? . . I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. . . Return ye now every man from his evil way, . . but ye have not inclined your ear, nor harkened unto me . . . Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them."

As the refusal of the Rechabites to do evil affords an example at every point for us, so will this judgment apply to us also.

We have many more prophets than Judah had, and in these last days even the Son of God has spoken unto us. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" God will not be mocked, and all his judgments are sure.

The Old Testament prophecies and promises run forward into our life, and we enjoy also the great spiritual light of the New Testament.

Responsibility is in proportion to light, and "to him that knoweth to do

good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." We are children of the day; and if we live as children of darkness, our guilt will be very deep and our judgment correspondingly sore.

If we yield to the temptations of ambition and greed, of fashion and pleasure, of the enticements of appetite and sensual indulgence, our judgment will come upon us in seared consciences and enslaving habits and wrecked lives.

We see such judgments stamped upon the faces and bodies, upon the hearts and homes of men, in ruin that should frighten us away from any such course of sin. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

### *5. The Reward of the Rechabites*

As disobedience to God brings its sure judgment, so does obedience reap its appropriate reward. "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done accordingly unto all that he hath commanded you; therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before him for ever."

The Rechabites did persist in their tribe through the captivity and returned with the Jews and later were mingled with that race.

But their spiritual descendants still remain and will ever be represented in those who keep the commandments of God. They that sow to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

#### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the life and time of Jeremiah.
2. Describe the manner of life of the Rechabites.
3. What are the advantages of simple customs and plain living?
4. What are some of the dangers connected with our civilization?
5. How far should we be loyal to the ways of our fathers?
6. How may we resist the temptations peculiar to our time?
7. Show that judgment and reward are interwoven in all our life.

# LESSON XI.—JUNE 10

## NEHEMIAH, THE BOLD BUILDER

### Nehemiah, an Example for Men of Affairs

*Golden Text: Be ye not afraid of them: remember the Lord.* Neh. 4:14.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 46:1–7.

**Reference Material:** Psalm 27; Rom. 8:31–39.

***Lesson Passages: Nehemiah 1–2; 4 6; 88:9–12; 12:31–13:31***

***Lesson Text: Nehemiah 4:6–15***

6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

7 ¶ But it came to pass, *that* when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, *and* that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

8 And conspired all of them together to come *and* to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is* much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you.*

13 ¶ Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, *and* on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD, *which is* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. External Opposition.***

***2. Persistent Prayer.***

***3. Praying and Watching.***

***4. Internal Opposition.***

***5. Patriotic Defense.***

***6. Enemies Stopped.***

Nehemiah, one of the captive Jews in Shushan, having heard from some returned friends of the lamentable state of affairs in Jerusalem, took the matter to God in prayer, and then waited for an opportunity to carry his desire and prayer into action.

**The opportunity soon came; it always does to those who, having first prayed, then wait and watch for it.**

While serving as cup-bearer Nehemiah's sad countenance led the king to inquire of him the cause of his sorrow, and this opened the way for him to set forth the condition of the city that was dear to him and to ask that he might be sent to rebuild it.

The request was granted, and this pious patriot was soon in Jerusalem clothed with power to proceed with his program. A night visit around the walls of the city disclosed the situation and enabled him to prepare and propose his plans.

The priests and people responded, "Let us rise up and build." The work was divided up among forty-four groups or gangs of workmen, and the walls, having been begun about the first of July, B. C. 444, were finished in September of the same year.

**Here is what one man of prayer and purpose can do. Nehemiah brought no new men to Jerusalem, but by putting spirit and speed into the men that were there he so energized and organized them that they were able to do a work which they thought could not be done and which they could not have done without the inspiration of a masterful leader.**

### *1. External Opposition*

The rebuilding of the city soon encountered opposition from external enemies. Sanballat and Tobiah, the Arabians and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites, surrounding pagan people, when they saw the walls going up and the breaches stopped were angry and conspired to fight against Jerusalem and stop the work. They feared that if the city were restored they would lose their power of petty tyranny and be reduced to subjection.

All the forces of political despotism and religious rancor were organized and let loose against the project. Jerusalem could be rebuilt only at the cost of battle.

It always has been so and is so today. The forces of evil have not been so suppressed and supplanted that they remain quiescent in the front of advancing good. There are always "vested interests" that stand in the way of moral reforms and social progress.

The building of the kingdom of God on earth is a mighty world battle that has convulsed all the ages and it still raging. There is everywhere a powerful conspiracy of unbelief and worldliness and vice to prevent the walls of this kingdom from rising and their breaches from being closed.

And the same opposition beats against the kingdom as it rises in the individual soul. A man cannot set about living the Christian life and building himself up in righteousness without drawing upon him the sneers and enmity of Sanballat and Tobiah; every faithful builder and soldier of Jesus Christ knows these men.

Righteous character still costs a battle and may cost blood.

### *2. Persistent Prayer*

What did Nehemiah and his workers do in the face of this formidable conspiracy and opposition? Drop the work in fear and discouragement and slip back into cowardly indifference and neglect? No, the man that prayed so earnestly in Shushan and came all the way to Jerusalem to carry out his prayer could not be guilty of such weakness and shame. "Nevertheless" -there is saving grace in that "nevertheless," already it sounds forth the note of victory.

What we often need is that spinal stiffness and stanchness that can face the most trying opposition and nevertheless not sink down or slink back, but stand up and go forward. Temptation and trial should make us true to our duty and task never the less but always the more.

"Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God." Still praying was this man Nehemiah. One would have thought that by this time he would have lost faith in prayer. He had been praying for many months, and what had prayer done for him but led him into an ambuscade of conspiracy that was about to break loose upon him in deadly hate?

Why not stop praying and do something "practical?"

But what can be more practical in entering upon an undertaking than first to clasp hands with God who has all power in heaven and on earth? "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God," calmly says Nehemiah, and never was there a more practical man than he.

Prayer puts us in communication and harmony with God, and then under his guidance and power we can do all things.

### *3. Praying and Watching*

Nehemiah, however, did not stop with praying. "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

The vision of prayer that opened his eyes to see God did not make him less keen and vigilant in watching men.

He did not expect that the breath of his prayer would blow his enemies away, but he rose from his knees to throw himself with all his might into defensive action.

Pray and then set a watch! was Nehemiah's rule. Cromwell's rule was framed on the same principle: Trust God and keep your powder dry. On the same principle, also, Chalmers said that we should pray as though all depended on God and then act as though all depended on man.

It thus appears that prayer is no easy road and short cut to our ends, but is only preparation and power. It is not a way in which we get God to do our work for us: rather it is a way in which God gets us do his work for him.

The true nature of prayer is expressed in James 5:16, which has been translated, "The prayer of a righteous man is of great force when energized."

The point is plain. We must energize our prayers, throwing our will into them and then they flow in the same current with God's will and are "of great force." Uttered as mere pious wishes they may be only so much troubled air, but when "energized" they may pull down mountains.

### *4. Internal Opposition*

Opposition from without was not the only discouragement the workers encountered; resistance also sprang up from within. "And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall." The Jews that dwelt on the borders of the enemies also came to Jerusalem and offered discouraging advice.

These faint-hearted and frightened Jews pleaded that they had been exhausted by hardship and toil, pointed to the piles of rubbish, and declared that they were not able to build the wall. As the walls rose higher the work grew harder, the novelty of the enterprise wore off, and the threatening attitude of the enemies at length overcame the courage of some and they wanted to throw down their tools and quit.

**It is hard enough to meet the opposition of open enemies; it is harder still to withstand the discouraging attitude and underhanded attacks of professed friends.**

The kingdom of God as it is represented in the church is divided and troubled with no little of this internal opposition. The divisions of the church sometimes sets it against itself and thus distract and weaken it. The kingdom of God and the church call for cooperation, and we should all join together in this work.

**Builders of walls must not be discouraged by piles of rubbish and not want to quit simply because they are tired; and we must keep on at our work whether we are resisted from without or from within.**

### *5. Patriotic Defence*

Nehemiah now took decisive measures to meet the enemy and inspire the people. Behind the walls he arrayed men, armed with swords and spears and bows, so stationed that they could be seen by the enemies outside. Then he delivered a rousing pious and patriotic speech to the nobles and rulers and rest of the people: "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible": here is the courage of faith. Nehemiah first turned the people towards the enemies that looked so formidable and filled them with fear, and then he turned them to the Lord and bade them remember how great and terrible he is.

**One who has seen the face of God as his friend need never more fear the face of man as his enemy. If God be for us, who can be against us?**

Then Nehemiah urged the people to "fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." Here he touched all the chords of patriotism and smote them into passion. Houses, sons, daughters, wives, what can so deeply appeal to us and so powerfully move us to action?

Here the man of prayer becomes the master statesman and marshalls all forces material and spiritual and psychological for the defence of his country.

**He who prays most earnestly may also prepare for conflict most vigorously and may fight most victoriously. Religion does not make weak men but men who are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.**

### *6. Enemies Stopped*

The greatest safeguard of peace, it has been said, is tremendous preparation for war. It was so in this case. When the enemies saw the glitter of steel behind the walls their warlike bluster and threatened attack received a pause. Their plan of sudden surprise and overwhelming assault was thwarted, their terrible threats turned out to be idle words, and they stopped and stayed at a respectful distance.

Keeping on the whole armour of God is the best defense against the fiery darts of the wicked. It is the sin that slips in upon us unawares that so often ensnares and overcomes us.

**When we are armed and on our guard against a temptation we already have the victory half won. Resist the devil and he will flee from you, and when he is gone the angels of God will come.**

Having halted the advance of the enemies, what did Nehemiah and his workers do next? Sit still and watch Sanballat and Tobiah? No, "we returned all of us to the wall, every one to his work."

**It is a poor policy simply to watch enemies: we must do something positive and push forward our cause. Building the wall of righteousness is itself an efficient way of battling against evil.**

Yet these Jews deftly combined work and war. Half of them worked on the walls and the other half stood armed with spears and shields, and also "every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." War could not keep them from work, and work could not keep them from being ready for war. They could lay a stone on the wall with a trowel or thrust an enemy through with a spear as duty required.

**So ought we to be armed and prepared that we can at the same time build the city of God and beat back the attacks of the devil. Let us not be so intent on watching evil that we cannot do good, or so absorbed in doing good that we cannot watch evil, but be prepared for and engaged in both, brave in war and faithful in work.**

Thus the inspiring leadership of one man reorganized the divided and discouraged forces at Jerusalem and massed them into the real walls of the city, which then soon built the walls of stone.

**Leadership is a necessary condition of success in any movement.**

The mere appearance of Napoleon on the field of battle was said to be equal to the arrival of fifty thousand fresh troops, and the appointment of Foch as the supreme commander of all the armies on all fronts was the decisive turning point in the Great War.

**We have a masterful Leader in the Captain of our salvation, and in following him we shall march to victory.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Who and where was Nehemiah and how did he hear of the condition of Jerusalem?
2. What measures did he take to bring relief to Jerusalem and to rebuild the city?
3. Who were the enemies that opposed his enterprise and why did they wish to stop him?
4. How can prayer enter as a practical force into our undertakings?
5. To what extent are we to resort to force in maintaining right?
6. What are some of the chief enemies that we have to fight?

# LESSON XII.—JUNE 17

## ESTHER, THE PATRIOT QUEEN

### Esther: A Study of Patriotism

*Golden Text: Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?* Esther 4:14.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 124.

**Reference Material:** Psalm 23; II Tim. 1:12.

***Lesson Passage: The Book of Esther***

***Lesson Text: Esther 4:13–5:3***

13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.
14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?
15 ¶ Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer*,
16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.
17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on *her* royal *apparel*, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.
2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, *that* she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that *was* in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.
3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what *is* thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

1. ***The Intrigues of an Ancient Persian Court.***
2. ***Haman the Agagite.***
3. ***Haman's Plot Against the Jews.***
4. ***The Queen's Daring Adventure.***
5. ***Esther's Character and Heroic Action.***

The story of Esther is based upon events in the court of Persia and was probably written in the time of the Maccabees to illustrate and inspire the heroic defense of the Jews against the oppressions of their Macedonian masters.

The impression sometimes entertained that Esther is a "bloody book" unworthy of a place in the canon of Scripture is not borne out by the book itself. The Jews in destroying their enemies in the story were only acting in self-defense, a right that is everywhere recognized. "The common fancy that Esther is a cruel book is entirely mistaken" (Peake's *Commentary*, p. 340).

The name of God does not occur in the book, but that "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform" is the lesson that is written large upon its pages. There are days when we cannot see the sun, but we do not doubt that it still shines, for its light sifts through the clouds and fills the world with its diffused splendor. God shines through the Book of Esther, though he is not named. There is here a hidden Hand that is moving the scenes of this drama and causing all things to work together for good.

The Bible is not always such a book of revelation as we would have expected. It goes into strange places to show us the presence of God and taxes all the world to furnish tribute to his providence.

**In this book it reaches far outside the Holy Land and plucks a leaf from heathen story and binds it up with the writings of Isaiah and John and Paul; and yet through all these pages there runs one increasing purpose of divine grace.**

### *1. The Intrigues of an Ancient Persian Court*

We are introduced into a Persian court in which the air is thick with Oriental plots and intrigues. Ahasuerus, or Xerxes, sat upon his throne of power and splendor, the mightiest monarch of the world. His empire stretched from India to Egypt, and he was burning with ambition to extend it over Greece and Europe and leave no corner of the world that did not pay him tribute.

In the third year of his reign he held a great festival to inaugurate this movement. His princes and servants were gathered from all parts of his dominion and for six months there was a prodigal display of pageantry and pomp. The grand affair of state reached its climax in a great popular feast in which for seven days wine flowed like water and revelry ran riot.

This debauchery ended in a most disgraceful act on the part of the king. In his drunken folly he commanded that Vashti his queen be brought before the princes and people to display her beauty, an exhibition that would have been considered immodest and scandalous by these Eastern people. Vashti showed unexpected independence and displayed bravery that have given her a high place among queenly heroines. She refused to obey such a shameful command and defied her drunken lord.

Instantly the imperious and passionate king burned with wrath and appealed to his princes to know what should be done with the rebellious queen. They set up a great cry that, if such conduct were tolerated in the queen, every man's wife would rise up against him and no man could rule his own home! So they urged the king to depose Vashti, which was quickly done.

It was then necessary to supply a new queen in her place, and Oriental methods were used to this end. The most beautiful maidens were selected and assembled from the empire that the king might choose one for his queen.

Jews were scattered through the kingdom and some were in Shushan the capital. What were the chances that one of these despised people would be chosen queen? Human probabilities would say not one in a million, but the course of affairs does not depend on human probability but on divine providence.

In Shushan was one Mordecai, a Jew, who had adopted his cousin Esther. She was beautiful above all the other maidens, the king's choice fell on her, and she was installed in the palace.

**It was not known to the king and the public that she was of Jewish blood, but God knew it, and he put her there for a purpose.**

### *2. Haman the Agagite*

The third chapter opens with the appearance on the scene of one Haman, who is described as an Agagite, a name that probably indicates that he was of barbarian origin. He became a favorite of the capricious king and was rapidly advanced in place and power until he was above all the princes. All the king's servants did him Oriental obeisance.

Haman waxed fat and proud, and as he fed upon the emoluments and honors of his great place he strutted with his little brief authority and as he walked through the king's gate he looked down with a high and haughty air upon the servants that obsequiously bowed low before him.

**Such pride is ever one of the dangers of prosperity, especially of rapid advancement.**

Sudden elevation is apt to inflate a man with a sense of his own importance, and such pride goeth before a fall. The oak that grows slowly and solidly in its place can withstand a storm, but the mushroom that shoots up in a night may be crushed by the first passing foot.

So all the king's servants bowed before Haman, "but Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence." Only one exception to the universal obeisance of the servants, but that one was enough; enough to wound Haman's swollen and sensitive pride and make him hot with wrath; enough to poison all the satisfaction of his place and honors; there could be no peace for him as long as that one hated man did not bend his knee and cringe before him; that one speck irritating his vision seemed to darken all his glory.

**Human pride nearly always has this fly in its ointment. Though one may reach his ambition in wealth or in office or in fame, yet there will be something wanting that will spoil it all.**

### *3. Haman's Plot Against the Jews*

Haman now laid a wide and deep plot against the Jews. On a given day they were to be exterminated root and branch, old and young. Lots were cast to determine the most auspicious day for the terrible deed. The lot fell on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month.

It was now necessary to get the consent of the king to the plan, and Haman came before him with a plausible speech. He described the Jews in telling terms. They were a dispersed or separated people that refused to mingle with the citizens of the country; they were a peculiar people whose customs were alien and repellent; they were a disloyal people who kept not the king's laws: therefore it was not for the king's profit to suffer them.

**All this has a modern sound and fits the conditions in many countries today.**

Then the wily Agagite unfolded his plan and made a bold bid for the king's support. Why should the king tolerate such an unprofitable people? Let it be written that they should be destroyed, and Haman will guarantee that the business will bring into the royal treasury ten thousand talents of silver,

an enormous sum variously estimated at from ten to twenty millions of dollars.

The speech took effect and, the king having granted Haman's request and handed him his signet ring, letters were hastily written and presently foam-flecked horses were racing along every road out from Shushan to every part of the empire, bearing authority and commands "to destroy, to kill and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, and to take the spoil of them for prey." Having done this, "the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Shushan was perplexed."

**Well might it be, for when such things are done the troubled city should not be able to sleep, and the lightnings of heaven will surely begin to flash and strike.**

### *4. The Queen's Daring Adventure*

Then there went up from every province of the empire a great cry of consternation and agony, such as went up from Egypt on the night when all the first-born were slain. Mordecai rent his garments and put on sackcloth and ashes and walked through the city, uttering a loud and bitter cry and stood before the king's gate.

The dreadful news quickly penetrated the palace and the young Jewish queen was troubled. She sent to Mordecai to inquire the meaning of the terrible matter, and received from him a statement of the affair with a message that she should go in before the king and plead for the life of her people.

The queen replied that she was forbidden by law to enter the inner court and that she would go in at the peril of her life. Mordecai sternly answered that if she did not go in she would perish with her father's house; and was she not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

**This demand put the poor queen in a hard situation.**

**But the dauntless bravery that has ever slept in Hebrew blood and asserted itself in sublime crises flashed its fire upon her cheek and she uttered the immortal words, "So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."**

On the third day she stood in the inner court of the palace where she could be seen by the king, and his outstretched golden sceptre was the royal

signal that she was granted grace in his sight. In answer to the king's question as to what she would have, she requested that he and Haman would attend a banquet she had prepared.

Succeeding chapters of the story tell how Haman went home from the first banquet; how that night the king was sleepless and learned from a book, in which were recorded the events of his reign, that Mordecai had once saved his life and ordered that he should be honored; how the next day Haman had to carry out this hateful order; how at a second banquet Haman was denounced by the queen and was ordered off by the king to be hung; how the queen obtained from the king a decree that the Jews should be permitted to defend themselves; and how they thus triumphed over their enemies.

Perhaps the one definitely religious act referred to in the whole book is the fasting observed by the Jews and by Esther and her companions before she went in before the king, for fasting in the Old Testament was employed as a sign and means of expressing mourning with the object of averting divine wrath or supplicating the divine favor in times of trial (II Sam. 12:18; Ezra 8:21.)

**The young queen together with her people thus engaged in prayer in preparation for this act of service and possible sacrifice which she was about to perform. And it is evident that she and her people through this whole tragic affair were pervaded and upheld by a beautiful spirit of piety.**

### *5. Esther's Character and Heroic Action*

Esther's character is radiant with heroic obedience to duty and service and sacrifice. She was virtually the first woman in the world of her day, surrounded with wealth and luxury, a child of fortune, the envy of the empire.

**How strong was her temptation to become a mere creature of fashion and pleasure and flit as a gay butterfly in the giddy world of the court.**

Yet this young Jewish girl, when duty and danger called, turned from all these royal attractions and set her face towards the cross of service and possible death.

Woman has a wonderful power in all her feminine gifts and in her peculiar ability and opportunity for service, and never is any one more recreant to a great trust and a high call than when she turns into the mere primrose path of wealth and pleasure, fashion and folly, and never are her graces so charming and beautiful as when they are devoted to the service of humanity and poured out as a precious ointment on Christ.

The cross assumes various forms and shapes, but it calls to every one as both a duty and a privilege, and our human life comes to its most glorious hour when we can say, "I go, and if I perish, I perish."

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. State the ground of prejudice against this book and show that it is unfounded.
2. Does God always need to write his name in a book to show his presence in it?
3. What was Haman's plot?
4. How did Mordecai circumvent the plot?
5. What are some of the strong and beautiful points in Esther's character?
6. What are some of the fields in which woman can specially serve Christ in our day? How can she show her patriotism?

# LESSON XIII.—JUNE 24

## REVIEW: GREAT MEN AND WOMEN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

### Lessons for Today from the Lives of Old Testament Characters

*Golden Text: Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.* Hebrews 12:1.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 99.

LESSON PLAN

*Introduction.*
1. ***From Abraham to Moses.***
2. ***A Rural Romance.***
3. ***Samuel and David.***
4. ***Elijah the Thunderbolt.***
5. ***Isaiah and Jeremiah.***
6. ***Nehemiah and Esther.***

We have been following the lives of these great men and women of the Old Testament as we would walk along a mountain ridge and mount to its summits whence we would gain wide views and splendid prospects and note how the range determined the uplift and level of the land and the course of rivers and carved the whole continent.

So are these great personages the dominating summits and forces of their time that shaped the channels of the centuries and have sent streams of blessing down upon us.

For these men and women, though so far separated from us in time, are yet not unrelated to us but are near us, even in our minds and lives; for as we study them they pass their religious ideas and ideals, faith and hope, trials and tears and victories on to us and live in us again.

We owe them much and would be living at far lower levels than we are had they not climbed these peaks and trod these mountain

ranges of religious vision and faith and transmitted their experience to us.

### *1. From Abraham to Moses*

It is difficult for us to realize how much we are indebted to Abraham. We are proud to acknowledge our debt to the Pilgrims and Puritans and Cavaliers who struck out west from the old lands of Europe and came to these bleak shores and gained a footing where they planted their seeds of faith which bloomed into our religious and civil institutions.

But our religious heredity goes much further back and cannot stop until it reaches Abraham! He was born and reared in darkest idolatrous polytheism, a degradation of God that works deep moral degradation in life.

**In this darkness he saw a gleam which he followed until it let him out into the knowledge of the one true and living God, which is our faith today.**

He was the great pioneer who struck out west and founded a new race whose spiritual descendants are all the worshippers of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**He wandered around in Palestine, finding no permanent lodgment, and left descendants who propagated his faith and bore it farther down towards us.**

Providence sent one of these down into Egypt in the person of Joseph, a great grandson of Abraham, who was a link in the chain that preserved the chosen family and kept the true faith from perishing.

Next in the spiritual succession arose Moses, another lofty mountain summit in this history from which our spiritual inheritance has also descended. He was the great Deliverer and Lawgiver of the chosen people. By mighty acts he flayed Egypt until it was glad to let the enslaved Hebrews go and he led them out triumphantly through the Red Sea and on to Sinai, where he gave them laws he received from God, which are the fundamental principles of our government and religion today.

**Judged from any level, historical or religious, Moses is one of the dominating personalities of all the centuries, and the impress of his hand and spirit is upon us in all our life.**

### *2. A Rural Romance*

Thrust into the midst of these great ones is a rural Hebrew girl whose romance is woven as a golden thread of love into the pages of these annals.

History is so crowded with great names and is so absorbed in their deeds and misdeeds that it does not have much room for the common people and everyday happenings. And yet the common people are millions in number compared with the few who wear crowns of place and distinction, and spectacular events seldom happen compared with the countless unnamed deeds of every day.

**History is beginning to correct this disproportion and is finding room for and taking interest in common folk. And the common folk are just as interesting and are certainly worth as much as the great people when we come into close acquaintance with them.**

This Hebrew love story is a beautiful tale that has won wide admiration. A Jewish family, driven by famine, emigrated into Moab, where the father died, leaving two sons who married Moabitish wives and then died, leaving the Hebrew mother-in-law with these two Moabitish daughters-in-law on her hands.

Naomi, the mother-in-law, was moved to return to her native land, and Orpah and Ruth, the daughters-in-law, were minded to return with her, but at the border of their country Orpah turned back to her old home and her heathen gods, and Ruth clave to Naomi and went with her to her native land and her religion.

With all the art and plot and interest of a novel the story tells how Ruth stepped through a gate to work in a barley field and in so doing met her fate and stepped into a home and became a mother and ancestor of our Lord.

**The character of Ruth shines out in noble beauty, her life illustrates how one may step on humble deeds of service to great rewards if not to high places, and by simply doing her duty she wove her name indelibly into the royal robe of Christ.**

### *3. Samuel and David*

Samuel appears upon the scene in these lessons near the end of his career. He was a John the Baptist going before the king to introduce him and then disappear before the royal presence.

Before laying down the burdens of his office he gave a public vindication of his career and administration, so that no charge could ever be brought against him that he had taken from any one "even a pair of shoes."

**He took care to leave matters in such shape that in after years petty-minded men moved by jealousy and spite could not belittle and asperse his conduct and character.**

He then pointed to the king whom the people had chosen and laid down the conditions of national prosperity. If they would fear the Lord and not rebel against his commandments it should be well with them, and these are the conditions of national well-being to this day.

**On the other hand he warned them that rebellion must reap retribution, and that whatsoever a nation soweth that shall it also reap is the most tremendous lesson of the Great War.**

Samuel anointed Saul, who soon went the way of disobedience and ruin, and David was then chosen and anointed by Samuel for the throne and crown.

The story of the selection of David for the great place is one of the most beautiful in the Bible. David's father and family had their own notions about who was the proper son to be called to such an honor, and when Samuel appeared in the home of Jesse and a great feast was prepared at which the choice was to be made. David the youngest boy was thought to be of so little account and was so far from being considered even a possibility for such an honor that he was sent off to tend the sheep, while the father and his other boys sat down to the table and waited for the result.

The result turned out to be just the opposite of all their thoughts and hopes. Beginning with the oldest, one after another of the sons was rejected, and then the prophet insisted on their calling the boy out in the sheep field, and on his ruddy brow and golden curls fell the crown that day.

**Often is it strikingly true that the last shall be first, and God does not choose after outward signs but inward states.**

**David, as poet-king, with all his faults and sad downfall, is one of the best loved men in the Bible, and he sang some of the finest religious lyrics this world has ever heard.**

### *4. Elijah the Thunderbolt*

There is a quick shift to the northern kingdom and Elijah, the sudden and fearful Thunderbolt of the Lord, bursts upon Israel. On the summit of Carmel as a giant altar commanding a wide sweep of mountain, valley and sea, was enacted a great and tragic trial between the false prophets of Baal and the lone true prophet of Jehovah.

The false prophets made their effort first to call fire from heaven, but their cries troubled the air in vain and their trial ended in pathetic and total failure.

Then Elijah, taking every precaution to shut out every possible suggestion of fraud, called upon his God, and fire fell and consumed the offering and licked up the water in the trenches and cracked and pulverized the very stones into dust.

> **It was a complete and crushing victory over the prophets of Baal and ended, in accordance with the method and spirit of the age, in crimsoning the stream of the Kishon with their blood.**

We still wrestle not only with flesh and blood but with spiritual hosts of wickedness in which we must quit ourselves like men.

> **There is ever a conflict between light and darkness, wickedness and righteousness, faith and unbelief, Christianity and false religions.**

Some of these false faiths are as unclean as the immoral worship of Baal, and they would poison the home and social relations and our whole civilization. While death for heresy has had its day and our weapons are not carnal, yet it still takes bravery to withstand all the wiles of these evil cults, and we need to use every art of watchfulness and defense to guard our people against them.

> **There are times of trial in religion when its very life is at stake, Elijah was faithful in his day, and we need in our day to stand faithful, having on the whole armor of God.**

### *5. Isaiah and Jeremiah*

Among all the stars of the Old Testament prophets Isaiah shines the most brilliant. He lived in dark days, but he saw a splendid vision of Jehovah

in the temple which caused him to cry out with a sense of his unclean lips, for the clearer and whiter is the vision of God's holiness the darker is the shadow of our own guilt.

A coal of fire touched to his lips by a seraph symbolized the cleansing that prepared him for his call to service. He heard a voice, "Whom shall I send?" and instantly answered, "Here am I; send me."

**God still needs messengers and is ever calling upon us to go on his errands of service, and equally are we called and saved to serve, and only as we go shall we find our mission and full reward.**

Yet it was a strange message Isaiah received, for he saw a prospect of wasted cities and a desolated land, even such a disjointed and ruined world as resulted from the Great War.

**But he also was assured of a faithful remnant as the seed of a better time, and in the most desperate situation the world is ever sweeping through the shadow of the globe into a better day.**

Jeremiah was the last prophet in Jerusalem as it was reeling and plunging into captivity, and he had much to weep over, in his Lamentations pouring out his tears in a flood. He lifted up his voice fearlessly against the evils of his time, warning the king and people of the coming captivity and urging them to surrender to the Babylonians who were thundering at their gates.

**But this put him, where many a faithful prophet has gone, in jail.**

### *6. Nehemiah and Esther*

Nehemiah was one of the Jews who came from Babylon and Shushan to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. He was a man of notable piety and prayer, and as he was born in captivity he had never seen his country, but being in an official position at the Persian court he had influence with the king.

**He found that opposition was still hindering the work, but he set a watch and armed the workmen so that they combined work with war.**

The whole process of rebuilding Jerusalem is paralleled in our work in rebuilding the world into the kingdom of God. The world is in ruins as

Jerusalem was and we are sent to reconstruct its moral and spiritual order.

**Opposition hinders us at every point, but prayer guides and strengthens us in it, and we are to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ and fight the battle of faith that will surely overcome the world.**

Esther is a dramatic story illustrating the play of human nature and revealing the web of the world as it is shot through with the threads of divine providence.

A young queen's heroic bravery in running the risk of death itself in behalf of her people is the central fact and splendid climax of the tragedy, and it turned out to be the turning-point of the plot and resulted in the salvation of the Jews and the destruction of their enemies.

**The lesson calls upon us to consider the racial prejudice and hatred and persecution that are still the lot of the Jews in the world. Through all these centuries they have borne a bitter burden as they wander through the world and meet this unhappy reception and fate.**

**Even in our own country there has been an uncalled for and unreasonable recrudescence of this prejudice. As Christians and Americans and humanitarians we should oppose this wrong and cruel thing and stand for equal rights and brotherhood among all classes and conditions of men.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What part do great men and women play in history?
2. What are the main events in Hebrew history from Abraham to Moses?
3. Why is interest in the common people filling a larger place in the study of history?
4. Narrate the chief events in Hebrew history from Samuel to David.
5. What great work did Elijah accomplish?
6. What were the political and social conditions in Judah in the times of Isaiah and Jeremiah?
7. What analogy may be traced between the rebuilding of Jerusalem and building the kingdom of God in the world?

# INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD QUARTER

The New Testament has its great men and women as well as the Old. They may not seem as tall to us as some of the pioneers of the Old Testament, such as Abraham and Moses, for distance lends enchantment to these men, they loom up larger because seen through the mists of antiquity.

Yet the great men and women of the New Testament, though nearer to us, do not fall to a lower level than the more ancient worthies, and by every test of greatness they belong to the few immortals who have really left their impress upon the world.

**John the Baptist, Mary the mother of Jesus, Peter and John, Matthew, Mark and Luke, Mary Magdalene, Martha and Mary, Stephen, Barnabas and Timothy, and Paul, these are the characters we are to study and their names are not unfamiliar to the world.**

Some of them, of course, are less conspicuous and not so well known as others, but they are a range of peaks rising far above the level of their time, and they culminate in Paul, one of the highest summits and greatest names of his century.

It was a great century in which they lived, when Rome was the arena of the mighty amphitheater of the world, and emperors and generals and philosophers and poets were filling the world with their renown, and yet how many of their names are known today outside of the narrow circle of scholars?

**But these New Testament characters, men of a despised race and of humble origin and calling and of no literary training wrote books that are now more precious than all the classics of Greece and Rome; and they have ploughed their names into the centuries whereas other men more noted in their day only " writ their names in water."**

**Among these names, also, is One that is above every name and that by the voice and song of the centuries has been crowned Lord of all.**

We do well, then, to study these great men and women of the New Testament, for even as historic characters and as literary writers and as the doers of great deeds they are great, and as the bearers of the torch of the gospel through the first century of our era they transmitted to us the Light of the world.

# THIRD QUARTER

## Great Men and Women of the Bible

## II. The New Testament

(Second Quarter of a Six Month's Course)

## LESSON I.—JULY 1

### JOHN THE BAPTIST

### Character and Work of John the Baptist

*Golden Text: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for he hath visited and redeemed his people.* Luke 1:68.

**Devotional Reading:** Isaiah 40:1–8.

**Reference Material:** Malachi 3:1–6.

***Lesson Passages: Matt. 3:1–17; 11:2–15; Mark 6:14–29; Luke 1: 5–80; John 1:6–37***

***Lesson Text: Luke 3:3–8; 7:24–28***

3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;
4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways *shall be* made smooth;
6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.
7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

24 ¶ And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?
25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.
26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.
27 This is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

## LESSON PLAN

*Introduction.*

1. *A Fiery Preacher.*
2. *With a Burning Message.*
3. *Not Afraid of His Congregation.*
4. *Questions about John.*
5. *The Testimony of Jesus to John.*

In passing from the Old Testament to the New great men and women do not grow fewer in number or shorter in stature, but still crowd thick upon the page and loom up as mountain peaks in human history.

John the Baptist is the first to step upon the stage and we have the authority of Jesus himself that a greater than he had not been born of women. He suddenly appears as a preacher holding a great revival meeting down in the Jordan valley. Nothing had been heard of him for thirty years during which he was growing up in the hill country of Judea in that seclusion and silence in which all great things must grow.

John was a Nazarite, we might call him a monk, a man who had withdrawn himself from human society and for years had lived a solitary life in the rocky regions around the Dead Sea.

His clothing consisted of a loose mantle or sack of coarse haircloth girt around his loins with a leather strap; and he lived on locusts and wild honey, plain fare counted good enough in that country.

**His life was close to the earth on its material side, but on its spiritual side it was close to the sky: for he lived in meditation and prayer.**

What was the meaning of this strange life? It was a reaction and protest against the formal hypocritical religion of his time. Religion among the Jews had gone to seed. There was no sap in it, there were no green leaves and growing fruit on it, but only dry pods and husks. The ceremonial system of Moses, good and necessary in its time, had desiccated into a hard formality and hollow hypocrisy from which humble honest souls turned away in loathing.

**Jewish orthodoxy had thus become a huge heap of dry wood and dusty straw: John the Baptist was the match that set this tinder on**

**fire, the flash from heaven that consumed it in flames; he was the Martin Luther of this reformation.**

Disgusted with Pharisaic hypocrisy he turned from the Jewish church into the wilderness: not that he might have less religion, but more religion; that out there in the solitude he might get close to God, as Moses did in the mount.

Woe to the church, however orthodox and respectable and wealthy it may be, out of which humble souls must go to find the Father.

### *1. A Fiery Preacher*

At length, being filled with the Spirit, John suddenly emerged from obscurity and appeared down on the banks of the Jordan where he began to preach. His striking personality, rough haircloth robe with its leather strap, uncut hair, flowing beard, and deep-set burning eye, suggested a prophet.

The news reached Jerusalem that there was a prophet down at the Jordan, and the crowds went pouring down the steep rocky roads to hear him. The excitement spread through the land, and the people came from every quarter, even from distant Galilee.

**What was the secret of the preacher's power? Not his manner of dress and appearance. Eccentricities never made a Martin Luther or a John Knox. Long hair does not make a long head.**

**John the Baptist was simply a sincere soul touched with the fire of God.**

He had got rid of empty forms and conventional cant and was speaking out his genuine beliefs and deep fiery emotions. Instead of mumbling traditional dogmas, John spoke living truth from the heart to the heart.

**He was a man with a message who with no smooth soft speech but with stern words brought religion back to reality and made it a living burning power.**

Such preaching created a tremendous sensation and drew the people in great crowds. They had been fed on dry husks long enough and wanted bread.

**The desiccation of our creed is one of the greatest dangers of religion. When the spirit evaporates out of it and leaves it dry and dead, it becomes so much husk and chaff that is fit only to be burned up or blown away.**

**We need to keep the sap of life flowing through our beliefs and ever breathe the holy breath of God that our faith may keep full of fresh vitality and fruitfulness.**

### *2. With a Burning Message*

The burning message of John was repentance as a preparation for the Messiah, who was about to appear. All this false religion had to be gotten rid of to make room for the true religion. The ground must be cleared of thorn roots that the good seed may be planted and find soil in which to sprout.

**Repentance prepares the way for Christ in our hearts and lives.**

Sinful motives and moods, passions and pursuits, are obstructive and antagonistic to the presence of Christ in our souls, and must be uprooted and cast out before his Spirit can come in, or rather as his Spirit comes in they must go out. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

**Repentance is the reaction of the soul against sin.**

The suggestive Greek word means "a change of mind," a mental voluntary act that reverses the mind and will. It is thus in its root not an emotion but a volition which we can exercise and for which we are responsible.

**It is a perception of wrong that grows into a pain and overpowers our love for sin.**

As an outer sign of such inner repentance, John instituted and administered the rite of baptism. The use of water for such a purpose was familiar among the Jews, and the outer sign visualizes and confirms the inner act and roots it deeper in the soul — and we should receive this seal of our faith.

John also quoted the prophet Isaiah to prove that his message had ancient authority and divine sanction. The truth he was preaching was not revolu-

tionary but evolutionary; the new grew out of the old and was its blossoming and fruitage. Isaiah was the original voice: John was its echo; Isaiah declared the message of repentance: John interpreted and applied it.

**The Bible is one book through which one increasing purpose runs, and throughout all its pages repentance prepares the way for the salvation of God.**

**Every sin of ours puts an obstruction before the wheels of Christ's chariot, and we should clear it away that his path may be straight and smooth.**

### *3. Not Afraid of His Congregation*

This preacher was not afraid of his congregation. A great multitude was massed before John, but he faced them without fear and struck straight and hard at their sins.

Among the crowds, whom did John espy but Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 3:7) from Jerusalem? It must have surprised the fervent preacher to see these hypocritical prelates and cold sceptics coming to hear his fiery denunciations. Will not the preacher, who has been so hotly denouncing sin, now smooth his speech and grow polite and cool and colorless in his preaching before these powerful dignitaries of the church and state?

No, John only made his arrows sharper and shot them straight at these doctors of divinity. "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

That showed the magnificent courage of the preacher. John was brave as a lion, and the presence of these big sinners from Jerusalem only roused his might and fire. He called them by a name that branded and scorched their guilt, and he gave them the same message of repentance that he gave to the rabble and scum of the city.

As Carlyle thought that the worst man in England would probably be found in the House of Lords, so John thought that the worst sinners in Jerusalem were these Pharisees and Sadducees, the high dignitaries in the church and state.

**Official position in the church is no insurance of holiness and protection against fiery condemnation. One may wear its sacred robes and stand in its pulpit or at its communion table and yet conceal vipers in his heart.**

John read the replies that the Pharisees were inwardly making to his preaching. "And begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father": that is just what they were saying. They prided themselves on their birth and ancestry and thought they were made of finer clay and richer blood than others, and were therefore safe.

But John dealt this pride a crushing blow: "for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." He told them that their proud birth and blood counted for nothing and that God could make better people out of the common rocks and dirt of the earth.

**Good birth is something to appreciate and guard, but when it is turned into selfish exclusiveness and trusted as a substitute for personal worth, it becomes foolish and wicked pride that shall be cast down into dust.**

**So the fiery prophet burnt his self-righteous and proud hearers with his hot message of truth, and this is the preaching that the world still needs.**

### *4. Questions about John*

The scene of the lesson now shifts to another occasion. John had been thrown into prison and had fallen into despondency and sent a committee of his disciples to interview Jesus and learn from him whether he were the true Messiah. Jesus gave a wonderful answer to the committee to take back to his doubting disciple and then proceeded to comment upon John.

He inquired of the people their purpose in going to hear John when he was preaching out in the wilderness and drawing crowds from all quarters. What did they expect to see? A reed shaken by the wind? Was John a flexible man without a spinal column, plastic in his opinions, fickle in his faith, currying favor with the crowd, and bending the supple hinges of the knee to the great?

**No, they knew that that brave spirit that had so fearlessly attacked sin and preached judgment to Pharisees and Sadducees was no such reed: he was a man of iron. Men of might have principles that never bend to any policy or popular breeze.**

Had they expected to see a man clothed in soft raiment, an effeminate voluptuous creature clad in silken apparel and dining on rich dainties?

They had gone to the wrong place for that; such men are not found out in the rocky wilderness, and they would be more likely to find one up in Herod's palace. They knew that John with his rough haircloth garment and his fare of locusts and wild honey was no soft voluptuary, but a stern ascetic.

**Men that move the world are rarely reared in luxury and are never votaries of personal comfort and pleasure.**

Before General McClellan's headquarters stood six immense four-horse wagons loaded with his personal equipage, yet he never got anywhere with his army, but Grant led those same troops down into the heart of the Confederacy with only a spare shirt, a hair brush and a tooth brush.

Did they expect to see a prophet? If so, they saw what they were looking for. Jesus puts his own seal on John as being much more than a prophet.

**Such a man was God's own messenger, and the people need not think that because he sent a delegation of inquiry he was fickle in his mind and had lost faith in Jesus.**

**One may at times have deep doubts and yet be a great believer and true prophet and preacher.**

### *5. The Testimony of Jesus to John*

Jesus now gives his personal testimony to the Baptist. "For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater than John the Baptist." This eulogy puts John on the summit of greatness as high as had then been reached by any human being.

**This judgment strikes us as strange, but the secret of it is that God's thoughts are not as our thoughts.**

The meaning is not that John was the equal of the great ones of earth at every point. Doubtless Moses overtopped him as a statesman and Plato as a philosopher and Caesar as a general. But in the moral elements of true greatness he measured up with any of them. In inflexible uprightness of character, clearness of spiritual vision, loftiness of purpose, and in heroic sacrifice of self and devotion to the service of God, among them that were born of women there was none greater than he.

Yet great as John was, the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater still: greater in opportunity and possibility, for we live in a wider field with clearer light under the uplift and inspiration of grander motives.

We ought to be taller than John, for we stand on his shoulders and all that have gone before us have helped to raise us higher.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Who were the parents of John and how was he related to Jesus?
2. What had been the preparation of John for his ministry?
3. Why does a revival meeting draw such great crowds of people?
4. Why were the Pharisees the greatest sinners in Jerusalem?
5. Why was Jesus so interested in learning the popular opinions about John?
6. What were the chief elements in John's greatness?

# LESSON II.—JULY 8

## MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

### Mary, the Mother of Jesus

*Golden Text: Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.* Matthew 1:21.

**Devotional Reading:** Luke 1:46–55.

**Reference Material:** Matt. 1:18–2: 12; 12:46–50; Luke 1:26–56; 2:1–52; John 2:1–11; 19:25–27.

***Lesson Passages: Matt. 1:18–2:12; 12:46–50; Luke 1:26–56; 2:1–52; John 2:1–11; 19:25–27***

***Lesson Text: Luke 2:41–52***

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.
42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.
43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it.*
44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance.
45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.
46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.
47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.
48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.
49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?
50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.
51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.
52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. A True Human Childhood.***
***2. Growth in Silence.***
***3. A Visit to the City.***
***4. Perplexed Parents.***
***5. Youthful Obedience.***

We are always interested in the childhood of great men, for we have a curiosity to see whether their genius budded in their earliest days or was a slow-growing plant that blossomed only in later years. Sometimes genius blooms early, as in Mozart and Macaulay, but in other instances it slumbers long and is unsuspected until it may suddenly manifest itself as though it were an explosive in the brain that had to wait for the spark to touch it off, or was a seed waiting for its summer. Precocity is not always a favorable sign, and is often a premature awakening that is followed by arrested development.

We wonder what may have been the infancy and youth of the most wonderful Child in the world and long for a peep behind the veil. But two or three brief descriptive verses and one anecdote tell us all we know of the boyhood of Jesus. We would like to know more, but it may be a wise reserve on the part of the gospels that has veiled these years in silence.

As usual the apocryphal gospels are most voluble where the inspired gospels are most reticent. They fill the childhood of Jesus with marvels and miracles that are irrational and absurd.

**The broad difference between the books that were put into the Bible and the books that were kept out is one of the wonders and proofs of inspiration.**

**The gospels hide the youth of Jesus from our view, giving us only these few verses as a hint of what lies behind the scene.**

### *1. A True Human Childhood*

But while the gospels maintain an impressive silence, yet we know more than they tell us and have considerable general knowledge of the childhood of Jesus.

We know that he was a true human child with a true human mother and grew up through all the stages and experiences of human life. His "baby hand was pressed against the circle of the breast." He was lulled to sleep in his mother's arms or in a cradle with a slumber song. He took his first tottering steps and invented his first childish words.

He played in his father's carpenter shop and went to the village school in the synagogue, where he studied the same Old Testament stories and history, psalms and prophecies, that we study in our homes and Sunday Schools.

There were brothers in the home, and he grew up in their companionship.

He associated with the boys of Nazareth and played on the very streets that we may yet visit. He climbed the hill back of the town and looked out over the historic valley of Esdraelon and must have caught glimpses of snow-crowned Hermon to the north and of the blue Mediterranean off to the west.

His love and close observation of nature that afterward embroidered his sermons with so many quotations from field and sky, bird song and flower blossom, must have begun in his boyhood and made him intimate with the fields around Nazareth.

**We draw the line at any wrong act or thought.**

He was human, and yet was sinless. But he was not a grown-up boy, old beyond his years, morbidly self-conscious and pious, such as we used to find in the Sunday school books; but a genuine boy, artless, inquiring, spirited, with his whole nature in free and healthy play.

**The whole reality and charm of his boyhood lie in the fact that he was a boy and not something else.**

### *2. Growth in Silence*

Jesus grew in silence and did not come forth before the world until he was ready for his work. Growth is the law of all greatness. The mountains are pushed up an inch at a time and the tree adds cell to cell through centuries. The exploding meteor has traveled through millions of invisible miles gathering momentum for that brief flash of splendor.

Jesus obeyed this law. He did not come as a fullgrown man or as a preternatural child, but as an unconscious infant, and then he grew. He was subject to all the laws of physical and mental growth. In the home and carpenter shop, in the school and synagogue he grew day by day, lesson by lesson, and increased in stature and wisdom.

**He was not crowded forward and overtaxed in his work, but grew slowly and solidly.**

He took things as they came in their proper order, and was not in a hurry. Thirty years he grew in seclusion before he came forth strong to do his work. He got ready before he began.

Children are often hurried forward too fast and pushed into publicity too

soon. Parents are ambitious to have their children show signs of brightness and surpass other children, and they urge them forward and often irreparably injure and sometimes they kill them.

It is pitiful to see children, through hot-house education and through dress and fashion, despoiled of their youth and made old beyond their years.

**Let them grow normally and take things as they come; they will be young men and women soon enough. Do not thrust them into the excitement and glare of the world, but keep them in seclusion and let them quietly increase in stature and wax strong in spirit, as Jesus did, until their time has come.**

### *3. A Visit to the City*

The single recorded incident in the boyhood of Jesus is "a solitary flowret out of the wonderful enclosed garden of thirty years." It occurred when he was twelve years of age.

This was a critical age and turning-point in the life of a Jewish boy. At this age he was obliged to learn a trade for his own support; he began to wear the phylacteries; and he became "a son of the law" and was in some degree released from parental authority. At this age the Jewish boy began to act on his own responsibility and to take care of himself, and this fact throws light on this incident.

Every year the parents of Jesus went to the feast of the Passover, the great religious festival and holiday of the Jews. Jesus had now reached the age when he was under obligation to go with them.

Probably for the first time he stepped out of the seclusion of the country town of Nazareth into the publicity of the metropolis. It must have been with emotions of deep wonder that he entered the holy city and witnessed its scenes and shared in the services of the temple.

**He had a boy's interest and delight in the sights of the city, but the center of interest for him was the Father's house.**

While at the feast the youth became separated from his parents, and they started home without him, supposing that he was in the caravan with friends,—a not unlikely occurrence. As he did not appear at the end of the first day's journey, however, they became solicitous and then alarmed and started back to find him. On the third day they discovered him in the

temple in the midst of the rabbis, hearing them and asking them questions, and displaying such wisdom that all were amazed.

It is a critical hour with a youth when he enters a city and is left there to himself. Its attractions open before his eyes and his feet many a path luring him to ruin.

**Jesus was susceptible to these temptations, but his religious instinct and training drew him to his Father's house. He did not leave his religion in the village home when he went to the city. The youth that is true to God in the city is safe.**

This scene in the boyhood of Jesus has sometimes been despoiled of its truth and beauty by making it out that he was instructing these rabbis and showing off his superior wisdom. On the contrary, he was hearing them and asking them questions; he was not instructor, but scholar.

Jesus never played the part of a smart boy, but was modest and teachable and kept his place in the presence of superiors; and it was his rare spirit of wisdom and candor that excited the admiration of those that heard him.

**A teachable spirit is a beautiful thing in a child, and it is just as beautiful in mature years and old age. It is one of the primary elements of Christian character and of all greatness.**

### *4. Perplexed Parents*

The parents were astonished—struck with admiration, as the strong Greek word means—at the scene. Parents are proverbially pleased with and proud of signs of promise in their children, and Mary and Joseph experienced this delight in a rare degree as the religious genius of Jesus began to flash out.

Yet there was also an ominous element in the situation which drew from the anxious mother the chiding question, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" She realized that the lines of parental influence were slipping from her hands, and that henceforth she could control her boy less and less and that he would act for himself more and more.

That was a painful moment for Mary, and it is a painful moment for every father and mother when they see their children beginning to separate themselves and assert their own individuality and responsibility.

**But this is necessary and best for children. Ripened seeds must drop off the tree, or there would be no more trees and fruit.**

Mary's question elicited from Jesus his first recorded utterance: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? "

**This reply is the kernel of this anecdote, the vital germ that has kept it alive and caused it to blossom out in the gospel.**

It expresses surprise in the mind of Jesus that his parents did not know that the attractions of the temple had kept him and that there was his proper place and chief interest.

We are here brought to the edge of the question, How early did Jesus become conscious of his divinity and his mission as the Messiah? Into this mystery we cannot penetrate, but at twelve years of age he had firmly grasped the deepest purpose of his life.

**Already his life was perfectly set to the music of his Father's will. Life with him was not idleness, or wealth, or pleasure, but service in his Father's house.**

Many people waste a good portion of life in finding out what they are here for, and some die even in old age without ever discovering why they were born.

**Young people should find out as early as possible what their mission in life is, and they should know in their childhood that it is not mere pleasure-seeking, or money-making, but is the Father's business.**

The parents of Jesus understood not his first recorded utterance—a sad commentary and mournful prophecy. How often has he been misunderstood and misrepresented so that his light has been turned into darkness? He was in the world and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

**And still the world misunderstands him, and very imperfectly do even the clearest Christian minds penetrate into the depth and power of his meaning. His simple words are larger than our largest thoughts of life and love.**

### *5. Youthful Obedience*

"And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them": a wonderful record is this of the Son of God. Subject unto them: received instruction and guidance from them and yielded obedience to them.

This relation of course had in it no element of severity and bondage. There were no unreasonable harsh restraints on the one side, and no wilfulness and waywardness on the other.

**Obedience was the disposition and habit and joy of Jesus. This was the beginning of that path of obedience that led him all the way through the temptation past the cross up to the throne of God. Had he begun by disobeying his earthly father, he would have ended by disobeying his heavenly Father.**

Obedience is a foundation stone on which all worthy life is built, and it is laid in the home in obeying parents. True obedience is not bondage but noble liberty. The steel track does not infringe upon the liberty of the locomotive, but gives it all the liberty it has. Right commandments are the steel track along which we can drive ourselves at utmost speed with perfect safety, and thus enjoy the fullest liberty.

**Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.**

#### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of village life in Nazareth as it was in the time of Jesus.
2. Show that the childhood life of Jesus came out in his preaching.
3. What are some of the advantages of quiet living and slow growth in children?
4. What drew Jesus to the temple in the city?
5. How did Jesus come to be so wise in his conversation with the rabbis?
6. What effect did the youthful obedience of Jesus have upon his later life?
7. What are some prominent characteristics of Mary the mother of Jesus?

# LESSON III.—JULY 15

## SIMON PETER

### Peter's Weakness and Strength

*Golden Text: Lord, thou knowest that I love thee; thou knowest all things.* John 21:17.

**Devotional Reading:** I Peter 2:1–10.

**Reference Material:** I and II Peter.

***Lesson Passages: John 1:35–42; Matt. 4:18–22; 14:28–31; 17: 1–13; Luke 5:1–10; 22:31 34; Acts, 2:1–5, 42; 8:14–25; 9:32–12:19; Gal. 2:1–11***

***Lesson Text: Matthew 16:13–18, 21–23; John 21:15–17***

13 ¶ When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?
14 And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.
18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

21 ¶ From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.
22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, LORD: this shall not be unto thee.
23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

15 ¶ So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, LORD; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.
16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, LORD; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.
17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, LORD, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Christ's Question about Himself.***

***2. Peter's Answer.***

*3. The Blessing Pronounced upon Peter.*
*4. The Shadow of the Cross.*
*5. Peter's Bad Blunder.*
*6. Peter Restored to Fellowship.*

Every reader of the gospels and follower of Christ must have a peculiar liking for Peter: for he was so human and so like ourselves.

Peter was a strange compound of strength and weakness, rock and clay, faith and fickleness; one day declaring he would never forsake Jesus and the next sweating that he did not know him; an illiterate fisherman expert in profanity who yet became a flaming apostle and wrote some immortal literature; deserting Jesus in a most critical hour and yet becoming a rock in the foundation of his kingdom; shamelessly betraying Christ, yet breaking into tears of penitence and receiving gracious forgiveness; falling deeply and disgracefully and then standing up fearless and faithful unto the end.

We love this man. He is our leader and teacher still, and in this lesson we see him at his best and at his worst, declaring Christ to be the Son of God and then trying to thwart his purpose and stop him on the way to the cross! Yes, Peter, we love you much and can learn much from your stumbling steps.

### *1. Christ's Question about Himself*

When they were far off in the north from the busy scenes in which they had been moving, Jesus put to his disciples the question, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am? "

This question is still throbbing at the heart of our civilization. First asked by an obscure Galilean in that far-off solitude, it has come thundering down the ages and is the mightiest question in the world today.

Ideals rule life. What men think determine what they do and are. The theories that are generally held with reference to industry, wealth, government, art, morals, and religion, mold human society into all its forms, as the hidden life of the tree fashions every leaf and bud.

What men think of Christ is a master force in the world today and more than anything else determines its life. Business, war, the League of Nations, none of these questions can be settled independently of this question.

The disciples gave the answers that men were then giving. The answers were various, but they all agreed in viewing Jesus as an extraordinary person, at least a prophet, a mysterious being shooting beyond the natural into the supernatural.

**Men are still giving various answers to this question, but they all take high ground with reference to his character and work.**

The answer that Jesus was a myth, or a dupe, or an impostor, is no longer tolerated. Even the greatest sceptics see something in this man that they cannot explain on ordinary principles, and they pay tributes to him that fall little short of divinity.

**The general mind of the world feels that Jesus Christ is a prophet in whose personality and power there is something supernatural.**

Jesus now turned the general question into a personal inquiry: "But who say ye that I am?" This was the point he was aiming at and coming to, for just then the important thing was, not what men in general thought but what these disciples thought of Jesus, for their thoughts were to determine the thoughts of the world.

**Important as is the general question of the world's view of Jesus, far more important to us each one is the individual inquiry. No one can escape its sharp personal point. A neutral answer or attitude is impossible.**

**Whatever we say or do is a decision; and nothing else goes so deep down and so far out into our lives as who we say Jesus is.**

### *2. Peter's Answer*

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," exclaimed the impulsive positive Peter. This thought did not then come into Peter's mind for the first time: it had been growing there a long while; the evidence for it had been accumulating; experience had been confirming it; but now for the first time it flashed upon him in the full vividness and vitality of its meaning and leaped into clear and strong expression.

**It is a great confession from every point of view. It grasps Christ as the Messiah, the fulfillment and perfect blossom of the Old Dispensation, and the ripened fruit of the New.**

The Jews were blinded by their pride at this point and refused to see in the humble Nazarene the Messiah of God, but Peter and the disciples in the midst of the prevailing unbelief and prejudice had insight and faith to see the truth.

The confession is great in that it exalts Christ as the Son of the living God, lifting him above humanity and crowning him with divinity. This is the heart of our Christian faith.

**It is the deity of Jesus that gives value to his humanity and charges his person and mission with divine power. Deny him this crown and he is reduced to the level of our poor human kind and our world is left without a Redeemer who is mighty to save.**

Why did Jesus ask the disciples this question? Did he not know what they thought of him? Yes, but he wanted to draw their faith out into full confession and thereby strengthen it.

**Our beliefs grow more definite and deeper when they are expressed.**

We do not see a truth clearly until we say it. A real conviction can hardly be kept shut up in the mind, and when we have committed ourselves to it in public confession then we are ready to stand up for it and will fight for it.

**Hence the value and necessity of a public confession of our faith.**

### *3. The Blessing Pronounced upon Peter*

The great confession was instantly crowned with a great blessing. "Blessed art thou, Simon-Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Faith in the Son of God is a root of all blessing and every duty done instantly brings its own reward.

This blessing had several elements. It was rooted back in the revelation of the Father. It did not spring up out of flesh and blood, but came down from above. Faith in Christ is a rational process according to the ordinary working of our minds, but deeper than our reason there is also working the Holy Spirit persuading and enabling us to believe and obey.

**No one can come unto the Son except the Father draw him. God's love is older than ours and at every step in redemption he comes first and is always ahead of us.**

The next blessing for Peter was that he should be a foundation stone in Christ's church: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." There is a play upon the words in the Greek which may be brought out by translating: "Thou art rock, and upon this Rock I will build my church."

Few passages in Scripture have been the subject of so much controversy as this. The two main interpretations are, first, that the rock on which Christ will build his church is Peter himself, and, second, that this rock is the faith he has just confessed.

**But the two views may be combined in the view that it is Peter as making this confession that is the foundation of the church. The Rock of Ages and chief cornerstone on which the church is built is Christ himself, but on this Rock is laid the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20).**

All believers are built into Christ's spiritual house as living stones (I Pet. 2:5) and are thus foundation for those that come after them and build on them.

Peter not only had the blessing of this faith in his own soul, but he had the further privilege of imparting it to others. He started the walls of Christ's kingdom in the world and this was a joy in itself. His work underlies our work and helps to bear us up today.

We in turn enjoy the same privilege. In so far as we are built on Christ and impart our faith to others, we are living stones in the walls of the kingdom and foundation for those above us.

The same general explanation applies to the keys given to Peter. Keys are symbols of authority and power. The supreme authority in the church is Christ himself (Rev. 3:7), but he delegates authority to apostles and ministers.

**There must be government in the church or it would fall into confusion, and ministers are authorized to rule over its affairs, preach the gospel, administer the ordinances, admit members, and exercise discipline.**

### *4. The Shadow of the Cross*

And now across the path of the disciples for the first time darkly fell the fateful shadow of the cross. From that time Jesus began to part the veil of the future before them and show them things to come.

He saw his path running straight up to Jerusalem into the murderous hatred of the priests and scribes; beyond their hatred he saw the terrible cross standing with its outstretched arms waiting to clasp and crush him in an agony of death; and beyond the cross he saw the power and splendor of the resurrection morning.

This had been largely hidden from the disciples, but Jesus had been bearing this momentous secret all along.

**The Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world, and before man had sinned or ever the mountains had been brought forth the Son gave himself to the work of redemption.**

### *5. Peter's Bad Blunder*

The disciples, however, were often a poor help to their Master and sometimes only made his burden the heavier. Peter, having been the first to cheer the heart of Jesus with his noble confession, was now the first to sadden him with a bad blunder.

He began to rebuke Jesus for thinking he would be killed and declared it should never happen. The plan of redemption unfolded by Jesus the roots of which ran back through all eternity, was not to Peter's liking and he proposed to stop it!

**How true is this to Peter's shortsighted vision and impulsive nature.**

But Jesus made short work with Peter's presumption. He unmasked him as an agent of Satan and bade him from his presence; he showed him up as a stumbling block in the way; and he exposed the root of his folly in a worldly mind. Never had such withering words from the lips of the Master fallen upon poor Peter, or upon any disciple; but he richly deserved the reproof.

**This is what comes of our attempting to hinder God's ways and to make improvements in and put finishing touches upon his plan.**

We frequently slide down into worldliness and utter foolish speeches. We by our unbelief and selfishness and folly stand in the way of the very cross of Christ.

In so far as we are doing this we are doing Satan's work and are stumbling blocks at the door of the kingdom. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, and the quicker we drop ours and take his, the better it will be for us.

**The way of the world that would escape the cross is not the way of Christ.**

**Then Jesus laid upon his disciples the same cross Peter tried to escape, saying unto them, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."**

**Christ never asks us to do anything that he has not first done himself, and having done it he asks us to follow.**

### *6. Peter Restored to Fellowship*

Peter was guilty of other and still deeper relapses in faithfulness as he went stumbling after Jesus, even denying him and swearing that he did not know him, but the good thing about Peter was that he always repented and wept bitter tears over his sin and folly.

During all the days following the resurrection Peter must have had a troubled conscience over his flagrant denials and it must have been with some sense of uneasiness that he met the Master on the shore of lake Galilee. "Lovest thou me more than these?" was the question with which Jesus delicately opened the painful subject. He continued to probe him until Peter was led to make the noble confession, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

**Thus was the impulsive Peter bound to Jesus with cords of love that never again were broken and held him faithful even unto death.**

**Love for Jesus is a power that will hold us true to him, and then we shall follow him through service and sacrifice and suffering, through temptation and trial to the victorious end.**

#### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why do we specially like Peter with all his faults?
2. Why was Jesus interested in knowing what men were saying about him?
3. How deeply does this question about Jesus go into our lives?
4. What blessings did Peter's confession bring to him?
5. How long had Jesus known that he was traveling towards the cross?
6. What are some of the ways in which we may try to hinder God and Christ in their will and work?

# LESSON IV.—JULY 22

## JOHN THE APOSTLE

### A Character Study of John

*Golden Text: God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* I John 4:16.

**Devotional Reading:** I John 4:11–21.

**Reference Material:** I and II and III John.

***Lesson Passages: Mark 1:16–20; 3:17; Luke 9:49–56; John 13:21–25; 19:26–27; Acts 4:13–20; Rev. 1:9.***

***Lesson Text: Luke 9:49–56; John 19:25–27; I John 4:7–8***

49 ¶ And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.
50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid *him* not: for he that is not against us is for us.
51 ¶ And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,
52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.
53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.
54 And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, LORD, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?
55 But he turned, and rebuked them and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.
56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village.

25 ¶ Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.
26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!
27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*.

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.
8 He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***
***1. An Unattached Disciple: Stop Him!***
***2. A Face Set Steadfast towards Jerusalem.***

***3. An Inhospitable Village: Burn It!***
***4. A Touching Scene at the Cross.***
***5. Love the Fullfiling of the Law.***

All the Christian world knows John. He was the disciple nearest to Jesus, leaning on his breast, and he has been nearest to Christians ever since. Jesus loved him, and so do all his followers. More than any other disciple he caught the spirit of Jesus and reflected it in his gospel. The Fourth Gospel gives us a view of the inner life of Jesus, and the other gospels predominately portray his outer life. John leads us into the secret place of intimate fellowship with the Master and most deeply imbues us with his spirit.

Yet John was not a spineless creature, supple and soft and sentimental, without character and spirit and courage, but he also was a man of bone and unbending principle, full of force and fire, a very "son of thunder," a man of fiery temperament which flashed out in tongues of flame under the impact of circumstance when he thought some vital principle was involved and imperiled.

In this lesson we see the sterner side of his nature in operation when he wanted to stop a disciple that was not working with him and burn a village that he thought was inhospitable, while we also see the tender side of his nature in the touching scene at the cross and the brief quotation from his epistle of love.

### *1. An Unattached Disciple: Stop Him!*

The disciples had just been disputing among themselves as to who should be greatest and received a rebuke in an object lesson when Jesus set a little child in the midst of them and said, "Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me."

This saying which laid emphasis on receiving the humblest follower in the name of Jesus seems to have recalled to John the case of a man whom they had seen casting out devils in the name of Jesus, "but we forbade him," he said, "because he followeth not with us."

Here we have an instance of conscientious intolerance towards one who was doing good in the name of Jesus and yet who did not belong to the regular apostolic order or company.

It was admitted that he was casting out devils in the name of Jesus, but he had not been called and ordained after the manner of the Twelve: he did not have regular credentials and was not orthodox in his standing; he was at least irregular if not heretical.

Here were the germ and budding of the ecclesiastic spirit that puts a main emphasis on official ordination and regularity and looks with suspicion if not with hostility upon anyone working, however successfully, outside of these lines.

John had tried to make short work with this unattached disciple by ordering him to stop!

This spirit has ever been widely and deeply spread in the Christian church and may be lurking in our hearts. We are all disposed to be intolerant in points, and the official order of our church is one of these points where we are often stiffest and most exclusive against those who "followeth not with us."

But Jesus instantly repudiated John's intolerance: "Forbid him not," he said: "for he that is not against us is for us."

Here is the splendid toleration and breadth and universal sympathy and fellowship of Jesus towards workers doing good in his name, whether ecclesiastically associated with him or with his official disciples or not.

And this is the attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ towards all workers in his name to this day.

It is not the church to which we belong or the official order and organization of our church, or any ecclesiastical name or garb, that gives validity and power to the message of the gospel, but it is the Spirit of Jesus working in and through the disciple whoever he may be.

Often has the church made mistakes in following the method of John and casting out those who did not follow with it. How were the Wesleys treated by the Church of England, and how is the Salvation Army regarded by the church to this day?

Many a man has been cast out of the church who yet proved to be a mighty worker for Christ, and we should ever be on our guard against any narrow sectarian spirit. Christ has room in his fellow-

**ship for all workers of good and our sympathies and coöperation should be as broad and generous as his.**

### *2. A Face Set Steadfastly towards Jerusalem*

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."

**He knew where he was going and towards what he was traveling.**

He was no explorer pushing out into an undiscovered country along unknown paths, but the fateful end was clear and terrible in its sharp outlines from the beginning.

The fact that his face was steadfastly set indicates that he was going under the motive and urge of some mighty resolution and unchangeable determination against all the ordinary currents of life. It was no pleasure journey on which he was setting out or triumphant event and crown that lured him on, but a dark prospect and fearful fate.

**Across his pathway stood etched against the sky the outstretched arms of the cross waiting to clasp him in their bloody embrace.**

It was the greatest adventure on the sea of sacrifice on which a soul ever set out. The Son of Man steadied himself as he launched out upon this deep. Even the Son of God had to take a new and deeper grip on himself and gird up his faith in the Father in order that he might unflinchingly face forward. He was going to prove his soul and save the world. He knew the price of the world's redemption and he was willing and determined to pay it. Grim resolution and unfaltering courage were expressed in his face as he steadfastly set it towards Jerusalem that day.

**Love was the master motive that drove and lured him on. Having loved the world he loved it unto the end.**

The cross has not yet fulfilled its work and vanished from the world, but it lies at the beginning of every Christian life. Christ's supreme command is, "Take up thy cross, and follow me." Still must our feet walk in this path and still is the cross the prelude and price of the crown.

If we wish to be carried through this world on flowery beds of ease, the Christian life is not for us. If we would save our souls and pay our part of the price of redemption the world will weave a crown of thorns for us and we must steadfastly set our face towards our cross.

### *3. An Inhospitable Village: Burn It!*

Another lesson in toleration was now taught the disciples, especially James and John. Messengers were sent in advance as they passed through unfriendly Samaria to find a place of lodging, and when word came back of a village that would not receive them, fire flashed out of James and John and they said, "Lord wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?"

This Samaritan village has shown us incivility: burn it! How short and conclusive seemed the method of dealing with it.

This method has not been unknown or infrequent in ecclesiastical history; in fact it has stained the pages of the church through all the centuries with blood.

Killing heretics began early. Paul began the bloody business in Jerusalem, and then had the sword applied to his own head. The Roman emperors, believing in the efficacy of this method, poured the fires of ten dreadful persecutions on the early Christians.

In time Christians began to decapitate and burn one another and Roman Catholics lighted fires for Protestants in many cities and countries, and even Protestants began to burn or hang one another. It is only in modern times that death for heresy has gone out of business.

And the method seems so short and sure. When a man talks against us, pull out his tongue, cut off his head, and he will then talk no more. But strangely enough he often keeps on talking more widely and powerfully than ever. The match put to the tinder to burn a Christian has often proved the truth of what Latimer said to Ridley on the way to the stake, "We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as shall never be put out." That candle now become a sun is burning in England and in all Protestant countries today and in its light we live.

Persecution is no proper way to meet erroneous opinions and conduct however wrong and dangerous they may seem to us. In doing injustice and

violence to such views we are likely to stir up sympathy with them and give them free course; we are scattering embers that will start fires elsewhere

> The disposition may still be in us that when others differ from us we would like to get at them by some short and sure way: but this is a fallacious method, and grave wrong and even murder may lurk in the thought.

Jesus again made short work of the wicked suggestion of James and John. "But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are." They knew not how wrong and wicked was their proposal and what seeds of persecution and bloodshed were wrapped up in it; they knew not that they were proposing a principle and process that would sow all the Christian centuries with fire and blood, divide the church of Christ and set Christians to slaughtering and burning one another!

> How little we know of all the evil things that are slumbering in our hearts and what violence and wickedness and murder would come stalking forth out of us to persecute and slay and burn if we would only let ourselves loose or God did not in mercy restrain us! We know not what manner of persons we are, and we need the restraint of the Spirit of Christ to keep us from all unrighteousness.

Jesus then uttered the grand principle that "the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

> The world has had enough injustice and persecution and war and bloodshed, and it now needs the healing grace and saving redemption of the Spirit of Christ to banish all enmity and strife and bring in the brotherhood and peace of God.

### *4. A Touching Scene at the Cross*

The scene of our lesson passes on to the cross and we are given a different view of John from that which we have just been considering. On that fateful occasion when all the disciples save one had fled, three or four women and one disciple stood by and gazed with unutterable sympathy upon the central Sufferer. These were Mary the mother of Jesus, Salome, Mary the wife of Cleopas, Mary Magdalene, and John the disciple.

When the eyes of Jesus fell on his mother his dying agonies did not prevent his giving his thoughtful and loving attention to her future comfort. Looking at his mother and John he said, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to John he said, "Behold thy mother!" "And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

How beautifully human it all is? While engaged in transacting the greatest business of time and eternity and the cross was crushing him into unconsciousness, Jesus lovingly provided his mother with a home. His suffering for the world did not let him forget his own kindred, and out of the soil of divine sacrifice grew this beautiful flower of human love.

And John, the son of thunder who wanted to forbid another disciple from working and burn an inhospitable town, had a tender heart that led him to care for the mother of his Master in his own home.

We must not judge a man by any one act of his, especially if it be an unjust and unlovely one, but let him speak his whole nature and inmost heart out, and then we may know him.

### *5. Love the Fulfilling of the Law*

Two brief verses from John's First Epistle give us another deep insight into the heart of the man. John is now in his last days when he has grown ripe and mellow in the Christian life. Love has gained the mastery over his fiery nature that would pour out death, and he has tempered judgment with mercy and transmuted law into love.

Beloved, whatever else we do, let us love one another. This is the golden cord that binds all virtues into harmony and beauty, the root that blooms into all fine fruits, the key-note of all the music of life, the very life of God that flows through us and turns all our deeds and days into song.

#### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Name some of the diverse elements in the composite character of John.

2. Can you name any Christian workers that we may think are not following with us? How should we treat them?

3. What crosses are in our path and how should we face them?

4. In what ways may we try to burn those who differ from us?

5. What lessons may we draw from Jesus' care for his mother?

6. How is love the fulfilling of the law?

# LESSON V.—JULY 29

## MATTHEW THE PUBLICAN

### Matthew: A study of Conversion

*Golden Text. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* Luke 5: 32.

**Devotional Reading:** Isaiah 55:1–7.

**Reference Material:** Mark 2:13–22; Matthew 1–28.

***Lesson Passages: Matt. 9:9–13; Luke 5:27–39***

***Lesson Text: Matthew 9:9–13; Luke 5:27–28***

9 ¶ And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.
10 ¶ And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.
11 And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?
12 But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.
13 But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

27 ¶ And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.
28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***
***1. The Call of a Business Man.***
***2. Jesus at a Dinner Party.***
***3. Scandalized Pharisees.***
***4. New Wine in New Bottles.***

The call of the Twelve was an important event in the ministry of Jesus and in the founding of his kingdom. All men must have helpers, and the greater is a man's ability and the higher up he is in position and service the more is he dependent on others who must aid him in carrying out his plans and purposes. The general must have an army, the king or president his cabinet and parliament or congress, the employer must have employees, the

capitalist must have laborers, the thinker must have practical men to apply his ideas.

Christ the Son of God and Founder of the kingdom of heaven on earth was also dependent on disciples, and on one occasion was dependent on as humble an animal as an ass and sent for one.

> Jesus needed men who were taught and trained in his ideas and principles and plans and filled with his spirit and energized with his might that they might take up his earthly work at the point where he withdrew from it and carry out his mission to the ends of the earth.

The twelve men he selected and called for this service were not great men according to the standards of this world but were plain men, mostly unlearned fishermen expert in profanity, representative of the common people. They were generally from the rural region of Galilee, and proud Jerusalem, the metropolis of the country and the seat of government and education and of religion and official worship where stood the great temple with its gorgeous ceremonies, was not permitted to put one name in this immortal list.

> The very fact that these were unlearned men unspoiled by human philosophy and traditional religion fitted them all the better for receiving as teachable disciples the simple words of Jesus and absorbing his spirit.

In this lesson we see the conversion and call of one of these men.

### *1. The Call of a Business Man*

We here witness the call of a business man into the service of Christ. Jesus found him at his place of business (he had probably seen him before) and spoke the fitting commanding word that drew the tax-collector after him as his disciple. Matthew was a busy man, but it is busy men that Christ wants.

> There need be no interference between business and religion; on the contrary they support and promote each other: religion puts its righteousness and trust and hope into business, and business puts its practicality and push and pluck into religion.

It may have been that in calling Matthew Jesus had an eye to utilizing his services as a writer. The tax-collector was necessarily an accurate observer, accustomed to keeping accounts and ready in the use of the pen. He would be a valuable man to be associated with Jesus as a biographer, and he fulfilled this office in writing this gospel.

**Every one can utilize his peculiar gifts and opportunities in the service of Christ.**

The Master calls each one to a special task, and we should find our work and do it with our might. We must win business men into the service of the kingdom and not hesitate to go to their place of business, as Jesus did, to ask them to follow him.

**A quiet word spoken for him in the privacy of the office or the roar of a factory has won many a man to Christ.**

The business of collecting the hated Roman taxes was a fearful offense and exasperation to the Jews and the Jew that would accept this office became a traitor and social outcast that was universally despised among his own people.

**Matthew was such a Jew, and it was a daring defiance of and break with popular opinion and prejudice for Jesus to call him as his disciple.**

By this act Jesus gave notice and demonstration that he would not be bound by public opinion and was no respecter of persons. The narrowness of Jewish exclusiveness and pride could not shackle him and he showed his independence and originality.

**He struck out along bold broad lines that broke down class distinctions and hatreds and made wide room in his kingdom for all classes and conditions of men.**

"Follow me," was the command of Jesus to Matthew, "and he arose and followed him." We must all follow some one, and we find the right Teacher and Guide in Jesus.

The command was immediately turned into conduct, faith leaped into action.

**We have a competent and trustworthy Guide and should follow him with unhesitating obedience. He that followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.**

**This is the simplicity of the gospel, this is conversion, when we hear the call of Christ to turn from our old life and go with him.**

### *2. Jesus at a Dinner Party*

Matthew was a man of some means and presently we find him giving a feast or dinner party in his home, and many publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples. This dinner was no ordinary feast but a notable social affair and the "great company" (Luke 5:29) implies a general gathering of this class of people; possibly scores or even hundreds assembled in the spacious court of the tax-gatherer's house.

**It is a significant fact that Jesus was at this feast. He was not a recluse or ascetic, standing aloof from the social life and joys of the world in tacit disapproval, but he shared in all human festivities, made wine at a wedding and sat with men at their feasts.**

The man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief was also anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. He touched all the shores and sounded all the deeps of the world and yet kept himself unspotted. His boat was in the sea of the world, but the sea was not in his boat.

**Yet even at this feast he had a religious end in view and was working out his mission.**

He was burrowing down into these lower strata of society in order that he might put under them the lever of the gospel. He associated with the lowest classes, not that they might drag him down, but that he might lift them up. He did not come to slice the loaf of society horizontally and save the upper crust, but to slice this loaf vertically and save every part of it.

Jesus met these hated tax-collectors and disreputable people on natural human ground as a man among men in pleasant social intercourse, and thus he gained their good will and confidence. Everybody else was against them,

but they felt that he was for them and this drew them to him: yet he was no more smirched by his presence among them than is the sunlight by the slime which it falls on and cleanses.

**We cannot help people as long as we stand apart from them, especially in an attitude of superiority, but we must stand on their level and give them our hand, and then we may win their sympathy and lift them up.**

**Thus Jesus was working out his mission whether he was in a place of business or in a place of pleasure; and wherever we go we should take our religion with us and turn every opportunity to the Master's use.**

### *3. Scandalized Pharisees*

This feast was a greater offence to the Pharisees than the call of Matthew and amounted to a public scandal. All their principles and precedents of social decorum and decency were outraged by such conduct.

They were quick to make their criticism to the disciples, asking and taunting them, "Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" Their self-righteousness had crystallized into that cold hardness of heart in which they despised others and counted themselves defiled if even the shadow of a "sinner" fell upon them as they passed along the street.

We must beware that this blind and foolish and wicked spirit does not lurk in our heart.

**It is pleasing to our pride to count ourselves better than others and think that we must keep separate and aloof from the common crowd. But this spirit is in deadly antagonism with the spirit of Christ, and a proper sense of our own sin and unworthiness will burn it out of us.**

This criticism was reported to Jesus and he made a reply that cut it up by the roots. He first laid down the principle that they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. The physician does not serve sound healthy people, but sick people; he would deny his mission and defeat his professed end if he forsook the sick and associated only with the well.

Jesus thus took the Pharisees on their own ground. Admitting that they were without taint of sinful disease as they claimed, he had no business with

them, but with publicans and sinners, who, the Pharisees themselves allowed, were sick unto death.

Next, he quoted from their own Scripture and convicted them of violating its principles. "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6). They had often gone to this well-known passage, but they had not yet learned its meaning.

Often as we have read a familiar text or Scripture we are to go to it again and again and see that we are reading it aright, clear it of any false or mistaken meaning that we have been reading into it, or that other men or ages have been reading into it, get a closer and correcter apprehension of its truth, and come into more vital fellowship with the mind of the Spirit.

**We may hold fast to the letter of Scripture and yet miss its spirit totally.**

The Pharisees were as inconsistent and absurd in their practice as a physician that would set up a great medical establishment and yet would refuse to receive or see a patient.

**In so far as we profess religion and maintain an exclusive and unbrotherly attitude towards sinners even the vilest, we are guilty of the same absurdity and bring upon ourselves the same condemnation.**

"For I am come," concluded Jesus, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" and this is still his mission in the world.

**If any of us are really righteous we have no need of Jesus Christ; but if we are sinners and our own hearts condemn us, then he is the very Saviour we need.**

### *4. New Wine in New Bottles*

The Pharisees had had their turn and next came the disciples of John the Baptist with their question and tacit criticism. This affair vexed them, but from a different point of view. It was not the publicans and sinners but the feast that troubled them. "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"

It was hard for them to see that any one could differ from them in religious practice and not be wrong, a difficulty that has split the religious world into a thousand fragments, and from which we are not free to this day.

John was an ascetic, and his disciples, living on their abstemious fare and at times starving the body into submission, thought the disciples of Jesus were having too good a time; they doubted religion that was so comfortable. Jesus gave three replies, "bright, genial, felicitous impromptus." First, the friends of the bridegroom should not be sad while the bridegroom is with them, when the bridegroom is taken away (hidden allusion to the tragic end), then they will fast.

Jesus thus directly justified joy in his disciples. Joy was the first note of the angels' song at his birth and it is the last note of the choral symphony of the redeemed in heaven. There is something wrong with religion that makes us sour and gloomy. To be saved is not to be sad.

Next, the great Teacher, a master of illustration, gave two parabolic sayings that contain a great principle. Unfulled cloth must not be used to patch old garments or the shrinking cloth will tear the garment; new wine must not be put in old wine-skins, or the fermenting wine will burst the skins and both will be lost.

The gospel refused to be put as a patch on the old Mosaic system: it let the old garment perish and cut its own cloth into a new garment.

Conservatism has an honored past, but it must not try to confine the new spirit of progress in its old bottles. Truth is ever growing and calling for larger expression.

The gospel is ever coming into broader fields with more splendid opportunities and must adopt new means and methods. Jesus thus shook his kingdom loose from fossilized ecclesiasticism and let it out into the life and liberty of growth and adaptation.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why did Jesus need to call the Twelve disciples?
2. What was Matthew's business and why was it unpopular among the Jews?
3. What relation should religion and business bear to each other?
4. What should be our relation to social enjoyments?
5. In what ways may the Pharisaic spirit be in us?
6. What is the central mission of Christ in the world?
7. In what sense is the gospel new cloth and new wine?

# LESSON VI.—AUGUST 5

## MARY MAGDALENE

### Mary Magdalene Saved and Serving

*Golden Text: Our soul waiteth for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.* Psalm 33:20.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 40:1–8.

**Reference Material:** Mark 15:40–16:8; Luke 23:49–24:12.

***Lesson Passages: Luke 8:1–3; Matt. 27: 55–56; John 19:25; 20: 1–18***

***Lesson Text: Luke 8:1–3; John 19:25; 20:11–18***

And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve *were* with him,

2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

25 ¶ Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

11 ¶ But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, *and looked* into the sepulchre,

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and *to* my God, and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the LORD, and *that* he had spoken these things unto her.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Certain Women.***

***2. Mistaken Tears.***

***3. The Unrecognized Master.***
***4. Restrained Familiarity.***
***5. Telling the Good News.***

The way a man treats a woman is a searching and fine test of the man; it goes deep into his character, opens up his inmost nature and may reveal him as by a flashlight. The coarse man at this point of human contact quickly shows his coarseness, and the fine-fibred man his delicacy.

**There is no truer test of a gentleman than this.**

Jesus stands this test perfectly. He came into close intimacy with all sorts and conditions of women from the purest and noblest to the most degraded. Yet whether in touch with the one or the other class he showed the utmost propriety and refinement, sympathy and tenderness. His relation to his own mother as shown on the cross was one of the noblest and most beautiful exhibitions of his human nature.

But his relations with the immoral women of his day were a still harder test of his character and conduct. They have ever been outcasts from whom the respectable and religious classes have stood apart so as to avoid their contaminating touch, but Jesus freely associated with them and yet kept himself as pure as the unspotted sunlight falling through the murky atmosphere upon slime and mud.

**No one ever dared question his character at this point, and here as at all points he endures the intensest light of publicity.**

### *1. Certain Women*

We are given an interesting glimpse into the way Jesus and his twelve disciples were supported as they went about among the cities and villages preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom. "Certain women . . . ministered unto him of their substance." They were evidently women of some means, and they were liberal contributers to the work of Jesus, which then, as now, could only be carried on by means of money.

Who were these women? One was "Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils." From early times this Mary has been identified with the "woman in the city, which was a sinner," who appears in the previous chapter (7:37), as though the devils cast out of her were her evil ways, but there is really no ground for this identification and an injustice has been done

to her; yet so persistent is such an evil reputation that it has been said that "all the water of the sea cannot wash off this stain from Mary Magdalene."

How careful we should be not to impute this evil name to any one on mere grounds of rumor and suspicion.

This Mary had been healed of demon possession, which was no indication of evil character, and Christ has cast out of the world many demons that have afflicted women.

Nothing is known of the two other women mentioned in this connection, but one of them was the wife of an officer of some importance in Herod's establishment, showing that the gospel was already making its way into some of the upper circles of society.

These women were the forerunners of a long procession and innumerable company of women that have flocked to Jesus, drawn thither by an unerring instinct and true discernment of his mission and meaning for them.

Woman has been blessed by Christ even more highly than man, having been lifted from a deeper bondage, and she has shown her appreciation of and gratitude for her Christian liberty and life by supporting the gospel and giving it wings to send it flying around the globe.

All our churches would be depleted and Christianity would be crippled in its missions were our Christian women to withdraw their ministry and their substance.

### *2. Mistaken Tears*

Among the faithful women who were last at the cross and first at the tomb was Mary Magdalene. Peter and John had entered the sepulchre and found it empty, and had departed. She stood outside weeping and peering into the tomb.

As she gazed timidly into the dusky cavern she discerned two white-robed angels sitting in the sepulchre, and they accosted her with the inquiry, "Woman, why weepest thou?" and she answered them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

Mary, weeping at the empty tomb of her Lord, ignorantly thinking that his body had been stolen away, presents a pathetic and deeply significant picture. Her faith was not able to ride the storm which she supposed had

ended in a wreck. She was weeping over what she thought was a piece of infinite mischief in God's world.

**All her passionate faith and love and hope had been swept into confusion by this tragic disaster.**

Yet God was shaping all these events into a triumphant victory that shall fill all eternity with its blessing and song.

**Mistaken tears! How many of them there are in this world? How often are our judgments as mistaken and blind?**

We see the wrong side of the web of this world, and its tangle of broken threads and blurred colors distracts and distresses our minds and hearts; but on the other side of the web God is weaving a pattern of beauty and blessing that will forever fill us with wonder and worship.

In particular, Mary was laboring under an entire mistake as to the meaning of that empty tomb; she thought that it meant that the body of her Lord had been taken and hidden away from her, and knew not that the tomb was empty because he was risen.

**So she was breaking her heart over a pure misunderstanding, the baseless imagination of her own mind.**

Had she but known it, there was no slightest reason for weeping at the door of that sepulchre. It was empty, not because a dead body had been carried out of it, but because a living body had walked out of it. What seemed to her the desecration of her dead was resurrection and glorification. That empty tomb, instead of taking her Lord away from her as a corpse, gave him back to her in the fulness of life.

**The darkness of that sepulchre was simply the shadow cast by a great light, and she was shedding tears over the shadow instead of walking in the light.**

How the angels must have wondered at such tears and viewed them with amused pity.

Are not our tears sometimes as far astray in their grief? Do we not trouble ourselves with much unnecessary distress and often shed tears over our own

imaginings? Are we not living in God's world and is he not causing all things to work together for our good? Is not the grave itself but the green mountain top of a far new world? Its decay and dust have not stolen away our dead, but they are risen into everlasting life and light.

**Did our blinded eyes and unbelieving hearts but know the truth about our dead, our tears would surely be seen to be as mistaken and baseless as the tears of Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb of her Lord.**

### *3. The Unrecognized Master*

Just then the fall of footsteps seems to have attracted her attention, and, turning, she saw Jesus standing there!

**So close was she to the living Lord whom she was mourning as dead! All she needed to do was to turn her face away from that empty tomb and she would see him.**

Are we not often close to the solution of our trouble and know it not? May we not simply be looking in the wrong direction, into some cavern of darkness and doubt, instead of towards the light, down into the grave instead of up into the sky, towards emptiness and unbelief instead of towards the face of our Lord?

**Everything may depend on the direction in which we are looking, and a simple turning of the face may turn our darkness into day.**

Yet Mary, seeing her Lord, "knew not that it was Jesus."

**Still blind to him while looking straight at him!**

She thought he was the gardener, and, on his asking her whom she was seeking, repeated her pathetic plaint and wanted to know where her Lord was laid. How could this be?

Several circumstances combined to this end for which she was not blameworthy. The morning was yet dusky and her eyes were dim with tears; but, chiefly, she was not expecting to see Jesus and so did not recognize him, especially as he may have had on unaccustomed clothing.

Furthermore there was something mysterious about the person of the risen Lord so that on a later occasion the two disciples on the way to Emmaus did not recognize him. None of these disciples was expecting a resurrection and at first refused to believe in it, and this is a strong fact in its favor.

Mary did not recognize her Lord because she saw him in an unexpected place and in an unfamiliar garb; is it not often so with us?

May we not insist on seeing Jesus in our own church and dressed up in our creed, and be blind to him as he appears in other places of worship dressed in a strange creed and ritual? Are not some sectarians so short-sighted that they cannot see Christ outside of their own church?

Is Christ so circumscribed and poor that he can appear in only one place and must always wear the same suit of clothes? Has God ever crowded all the truth and grace and glory of Christ into one sectarian hut?

Blameworthy are we in our blindness if we do not have enough clearness and breadth of vision to recognize our Lord in whatever place and garb he may appear.

### *4. Restrained Familiarity*

Mary did not recognize even the voice of Jesus when he at first addressed her with his inquiry as to the cause of her weeping, but when he simply called her "Mary," instantly she recognized him and responded with "Rabboni," "Master." The tone of voice suddenly grew familiar when it pronounced her own name.

This personal address that calls one by name is one of the sure touches and strong ties of friendship; and this tie binds Christ and Christians together. "He calleth his own by name."

Mary was about to embrace and cling to her Lord, when he gently dissuaded her with the bidding, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father."

It may not be possible for us to hit the exact meaning and purpose of this admonition, for it depends on the purpose of Mary in her movement to lay

hold of Jesus. Probably she thought he had come back to abide, and she was about to express her joy by clasping him. But Jesus intimated to her that he had not come to stay and must yet ascend to the Father.

In some sense and degree the old familiar relations were not to be resumed, her familiarity must be restrained, for he had now risen as the glorified Lord and was about to ascend to the eternal throne and would henceforth receive full divine worship.

There are impulsive mistaken ways in which we may think to honor and serve Christ. Sometimes Jesus is addressed in prayer or spoken of in preaching or in our common speech in terms of familiarity and endearment that intrude upon proper reverence for him and at least jar upon our sense of propriety and taste.

He is now the exalted and glorified Christ, and though he is still near us and admits us to his fellowship, yet reverence should restrain us from expressions of free and easy intimacy.

### *5. Telling the Good News*

Mary was not permitted to come into too familiar relations with Jesus, but there was something she could do for him: "Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her."

We are all glad to be the bearer of good news, and to Mary was given the great privilege of carrying first to the despondent disciples this greatest piece of good news that mortals ever heard.

Out of the twilight of that garden she hastened with the new light of joy beaming in her face to scatter the darkness that had settled down like midnight on the disciples and usher them into the morning of the resurrection day.

That message was the news of a Friend come back from the country from whose bourne no traveler ever returns, and it set them wild with joy.

At first is seemed as an idle tale, too good to be true, but as it was confirmed by many infallible proofs it dispelled all their darkness and doubt and made them new and mighty men in Christ who put the church on this Rock of the Resurrection and then went out to turn the world upside down.

**In the light and joy of this good news we live and work today, and it is our mission to keep on telling it to the world.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the relation of Jesus to women.
2. What do we know about Mary Magdalene?
3. For what purpose and in what state of mind did Mary go to the tomb of Jesus?
4. In what ways may our tears sometimes be mistaken?
5. How may we fail to recognize Jesus?
6. What use should we make of the resurrection of Christ?

# LESSON VII.—AUGUST 12

## MARTHA AND MARY

### Home Problem Illustrated by Martha and Mary

*Golden Text: Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.* Luke 10:42.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 116:1–8.

**Reference Material:** Proverbs 31:10–31.

***Lesson Passages: Luke 10:38–42; John 11:1—12:8; Mark 14:3–9***

***Lesson Text: Luke 10:38–42; Mark 14:3–9***

38 ¶ Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.
39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.
40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, LORD, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.
41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:
42 But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

3 ¶ And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured *it* on his head.
4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?
5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.
6 And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.
7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.
8 She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.
9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Contrasted Sisters.***
***2. Jesus a Guest at Simon's Table.***
***3. The Alabaster Jar of Ointment.***
***4. Critical Disciples.***
***5. A Rare Eulogy.***

The home is the foundation and center of our civilization, the fountain whence flow the streams that compose and determine all currents of the world. Out of the home are all the issues of life, for it takes its inmates in their most plastic and fluid state and molds them into disposition and habit before other influences can get at them. The child of today will be the father and business man and citizen, or the mother and home-maker, of tomorrow.

The home is the garden in which grow the finest fruits of the present, and it is the seedbed of the future. In it are gathered and centered our most precious possessions and treasures and the purest joys and deepest satisfactions of life. Be it ever so humble there is no other place like it, and towards it our tired feet and yearning hearts ever turn.

**Hence the vital importance of home religion so that all its teachings and influences and very atmosphere may be guided and pervaded and all its problems be solved by the Christian spirit.**

**Jesus had no home of his own, but he gladly entered into homes and irradiated them by his presence and exhibited behaviour as perfect in form as it was beautiful in spirit, and he is now making all homes better.**

### *1. Contrasted Sisters*

We find Jesus paying his first recorded visit to that house in Bethany which, more than any other place during his ministry, seems to have been home to him. Here he found rest and hospitality and friendship, and here he spoke words that still relate to vital points in our home life.

Two sisters were in this home whose contrasted temperaments complicated their domestic relations and who represent different types of human personalities and of Christian character and service.

Martha was the active sister, who when Jesus appeared as a guest forthwith set about preparing a meal, and there was soon in the house a clatter of dishes out in the kitchen, a running and a rushing about, and a general air of haste and confusion.

**She was a type of an active and practical person, overloaded with work, always busy to the point of distraction, but busy on the lower side of life, buried in the kitchen or office and seldom rising into the higher regions of thought, superabundant in labors but deficient in meditation.**

In marked contrast with Martha was the more passive Mary who sat at Jesus' feet, a rapt listener to his wonderful words.

She is a type of a meditative person who draws apart at times from busy activities for reading, meditation and communion with God.

These two types may easily misunderstand and even criticize and berate each other. The pushing hustler may have small respect for the thinker who seems to do nothing but sit and read and meditate, and the thinker may underrate the practical worker as a shallow and sordid person and fail to appreciate his real worth in the world.

We should know that it takes all kinds of people to make a world, different types and temperaments to blend their varying individualities into a stronger and richer unity, and this should make us broad and fair and kind in judging one another.

We have these different temperaments in the home and we should learn to understand and adjust ourselves to one another and live and work together in harmony.

### *2. Jesus a Guest at Simon's Table*

The scene shifts to Simon's house and we find Jesus a guest at his table. Here we witness a rare occurrence in the life of Jesus, his receiving gifts. What was he receiving?

First, his supper. Jesus did not have a house and table of his own. He was not poor as a pauper is poor: he paid his taxes and the disciples had a treasurer who carried a purse; yet Jesus had not where to lay his head.

His disciples related many wonderful things about him; they told of his healing the sick and feeding the multitudes and raising the dead; but they never claimed for him a great estate and a fine house and a rich table; on the contrary, they admitted that he was homeless and told how he was tired and thirsty and begged for a drink of water from a Samaritan woman and sat at meat in the house of Simon the leper.

Evidently this Man's greatness could not be measured by material standards and his life did not consist in the abundance of the things which he possessed.

Jesus freely moved around in all classes and conditions of society, eating and drinking with men and women in their homes, at one time with publicans and sinners and at another time with people of refinement and wealth, and thus lived a full-orbed human life in all its complexity and richness and yet ever showed himself the perfect man in character and conduct.

### *3. An Alabaster Jar of Ointment*

Jesus received a second gift in this house. A woman, who was Mary the sister of Martha, brought an alabaster jar of spikenard, and, snapping off the slender neck, poured the costly fragrant ointment on Jesus, anointing his person and filling all the room with the perfume.

This was a beautiful Oriental expression of personal respect and devotion.

The shadow of the cross was already falling on this little company of friends gathered with the Master. The meditative Mary was brooding over the impending mystery, her heart grew full of love, and she spontaneously poured it out in this expressive act.

Simon's bread fed the body of Jesus, but Mary's devotion fed his heart. The one gave him physical strength for a few hours, but the other passed into his soul and became its imperishable satisfaction and comfort.

We should more frequently and fully manifest our love to one another.

Love should not lie dumb and dormant in the heart, but should find rich expression in beautiful words and deeds. The gift may not be costly and yet it may go deep into the heart and give strength for many days.

The famine of bread in the world is often pitiful, but the famine of love is wider and deeper and more tragical.

If our love would only more often flower out into fragrant expression, it would make many a desert life rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Mary did not intend her act as an ostentatious exhibition of her love, with her it was a silent deed, and yet she could not prevent her perfume from escaping and filling all the room.

**Love does not need to advertise itself, and yet its presence cannot be concealed.**

### *4. Critical Disciples*

A strange thing now occurred. Some of the disciples saw Mary's act with surprise and indignation, and whisperings began to pass around among them which found outspoken expression from Judas (John 12:4), "Why was this waste of ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor."

**These rough fishermen could not appreciate Mary's fine act.**

They were square-headed, hard-fisted, practical men used to counting pence, and had no sentiment in them. They thought that she had wasted her ointment and had nothing to show for it, whereas she might have sold it for hard cash with which she could have done much practical good and had something to spare for herself. If Mary loved Jesus, why did she not simply tell him so, and save her ointment?

**This pence view of things is still common enough among us.**

There are people that look at everything in this light. They measure everything in feet and pounds, and especially in dollars and cents. They call for statistics and refuse to believe in anything that cannot be put down in a column of figures. They come into a church and ask for the number of converts and baptisms and figure out how much they cost apiece and make comparisons with other churches and ministers to see who are saving the most people at the least expense.

Such people generally have small respect for what they call mere sentiment. Affection and devotion are so much moonshine to them, harmless enough perhaps as long as they do not cost any money. Like Gradgrind they believe only in "facts, Sir, hard facts."

Such a man would give his wife money to buy a dress or a pair of shoes provided the need for them was plainly apparent to him; if she were sick he would send for a doctor; but he would not think of giving her a present, such as a watch, simply to express his love for her. Why, that watch might be sold for a hundred dollars and that would buy a horse or paint the barn! And he would murmur with indignation at the very thought of such extravagant waste.

Now the money view of things has its time and place and may then be decisive. Statistics have their use and must often be compiled and consulted. There is much waste in the world that ought to be stopped.

**But there is saving that is loss, and there is apparent waste that is wealth.**

**The money view may be a money vice, and in some cases statistics can tell us everything except the truth.**

The finest and best things in the world cannot be measured and bought or sold. We can compute the size and weight of the earth, but not the value of the sunset and blue sky.

**We can weigh the newborn baby in the scales, but not the mother's love for her child. Character cannot be measured with a tapeline or be sold by the pound. Love cannot be bought or sold in the market, any more than can sunbeams or bits of gorgeously-colored clouds.**

**We have slipped far away from the spiritual into the material when we begin to talk of pence. Affection, devotion, heart, spirit, are not in the same class with money and cannot be compared with mountains of gold.**

It was Judas that gave voice to this criticism and suggested selling the ointment because he carried the bag and was a thief. He cared not for the poor, but his own palms itched to get hold of those three hundred pence.

**His interest in the poor was affected and false, and his bitter sneer was simply the expression of his own selfishness, and this puts those who take the pence view of things in bad company.**

### *5. A Rare Eulogy*

Mary poured her ointment out as an expression of her love to Jesus, and was this waste? Jesus himself did not think so. "Let her alone," he said to these cold critical disciples; "why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me."

Mary had evidently intended to use this costly ointment on the dead

body of Jesus (Matt. 26:12), but her loving heart had hurried her into its application while he was yet alive, and this act was grateful to him.

We reserve too much affection for our dear ones until they are dead: it would be more appreciated by them while they are living. It is better to have one rich red rose in the hand than to be smothered with flowers in the coffin.

Was that waste that cheered the heart of Jesus and made him stronger to help the poor, and thereby helped them infinitely more widely and powerfully than if she had given them millions of pence?

So she converted the fragrance of her precious ointment into the fragrance of her heart, and thus turned this material waste into richer spiritual wealth.

"She hath done what she could," said Jesus. No grander eulogy was ever pronounced upon man or woman.

It is the brightest crown that can be placed upon human brow and is a more imperishable monument than marble shaft or tablet of brass.

Yet Mary had done no great thing as men count greatness. She was not that finest idol of the world, a woman of genius. She had not written a great book, or charmed the world with her song. She did not have wealth, or influential family connections. She was only a plain home-keeping woman, not to be distinguished outwardly from countless others. And she simply broke a jar of ointment on Jesus as the expression of her devotion to him. But her fine act greatly pleased and deeply touched Jesus and cheered his heart.

It was not the greatness of the deed, but the purity and loftiness of her motive that received so bright a crown.

This beautiful deed that men criticised and scorned has spread its fragrance through the whole world, and it is literally fulfilled that wherever the gospel is preached Mary receives her memorial of honor.

**Doing what we can for Jesus is our highest attainment and honor: more than this God does not ask; less than this we should not give.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What was and is the relation of Jesus to the home?
2. Give some contrasted points in the characters of Martha and Mary.
3. What were some other homes in which we find Jesus and how did he always comport himself as a guest?
4. What are some of the ways in which we may show our affection to others?
5. What was wrong with the disciples' criticism of Mary's act?
6. What is the greatest thing any human being can do?
7. What are some home problems that the Christian spirit can solve?

# LESSON VIII.—AUGUST 19

## STEPHEN THE MARTYR

### The Spirit of Stephen in the Modern Church

*Golden Text: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* Romans 8:35.

**Devotional Reading:** Romans 8:31–39.

**Reference Material:** Hebrews 11.

***Lesson Passages Acts 6:1–8:3; 22:20***

***Lesson Text: Acts 6:8–15; 7:54–60***

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 ¶ Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

54 ¶ When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him:* and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, LORD, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Stephen the Eloquent Deacon.***

***2. The Charges Against Stephen.***

### *3. The Transfigured Face.*
### *4. Murderous Stones.*

Dissension arose early in the Christian church. Growth outran grace. No sooner had external trouble subsided than internal trouble arose over matters of the distribution of the charitable funds.

**The trouble, however, was turned to good.**

The apostles were doing everything and so were overworked and saw that they must have help. A congregational meeting was called and they stated the situation. It was enough for them to preach, let others be appointed to manage the funds and take care of the poor.

Thus a new office arose out of this first church dissension and seven deacons were elected.

**This gives us an interesting insight into the growth of church government.**

**No inspired system was enjoined, but organization grew and was adapted to the circumstances just as it was needed, and this has been the history of the church to this day.**

### *1. Stephen the Eloquent Deacon*

Among these seven deacons Stephen stood first. Nothing more is known of him than appears in this narrative, but in this one event he leaped into the first place in the history of the church. We hear nothing of his ministrations as a deacon, but he shot far beyond this office into power and fame as a preacher and inaugurated a momentous evolution in the history of Christianity.

**Pauline doctrine and Paul himself have their spiritual ancestry in Stephen.**

In personal character he is described as being "full of faith and power." He was a sympathetic and winsome man whose piety was the beauty of holiness. Such men are sometimes weak, without offence, but also without force, but Stephen was also a man of power.

He combined strength and beauty, beneath his amiable gracious nature lay strong bones, and iron burned in his blood.

His grace and power flowed out in streams of beneficence and wrought signs and great wonders among the people.

Such a man needed looking after by the opponents of the new faith and they were not slow to arise against him. There was in Jerusalem a synagogue of Libertines, possibly Jews that had been taken captive and freed by the Romans, and there were also Grecian Jews, or Jews from foreign parts that spoke Greek (Stephen himself being a Grecian as his Greek name shows), and these foreign Jews were foremost in attacking the preacher of the new faith.

As long as the argument was carried on with reason and Scripture, Stephen was too strong for them and they were not able to withstand the wisdom and power with which he spoke. Beaten along this line, they dropped spiritual weapons and resorted to their old measures of persecution and force; they stopped his preaching with police and answered his argument with arrest.

First, they procured perjurers to swear falsely against him and then they stirred up popular fanaticism and finally they got the priests after him, and soon Stephen stood arrested before the Sanhedrin, and the same business was begun that crucified Jesus and has so often blotted the pages of ecclesiastical history.

In spite of all their efforts at forcible suppression, the new faith was still growing and the priests were becoming desperate.

These men were conscientious, but conscience may be blind and lead men into the bitterest bigotry and deepest malignity. If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Hence the duty we are ever under to seek the light and know the truth in the spirit of honest search and open mindedness.

### *2. The Charges Against Stephen*

We are not told what doctrine Stephen preached, but we may gather it from the charges brought against him. While the charges of these perjured witnesses were false in spirit, yet they were true in substance, for Stephen did not deny them and his own defence bore them out.

It was false that he spoke blasphemy, but it was true that he did preach

doctrines which seemed to them destructive and sacrilegious. He did speak "against this holy place, and the law," though not in the sense and in the spirit which they imputed to him.

**It was doubtless true that the witnesses heard him say, in substance if not in words, " that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us," for Jesus himself asserted this very thing.**

As he was leaving the temple for the last time he said to one of his disciples (Mark 18:2), "There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down "; and to the woman at Jacob's well he said, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father " (John 4:21).

**By these deliverances he boldly swept the temple and the customs of Moses off that mountain top in Jerusalem.**

**To an orthodox Jew no more radically iconoclastic and terribly destructive blasphemy could have been uttered.**

Stephen was the first to grasp and proclaim the truth that the old dispensation must disappear before the new. He began to shake the church loose from the narrowness and bondage of Moses (necessary and good in its day) and let it out into the glorious liberty of Christ.

**This process cost the church a long battle in which Paul was the magnificent champion of liberty, but it was Stephen's inspired genius that first saw the truth and his bravery that began the battle.**

We see, then, why the Jews were so terribly incensed against Stephen's doctrine; they believed their religious life was at stake; Moses, who has been the innocent cause of so many ecclesiastical controversies, was being attacked.

Yet the customs of Moses were not being destroyed in the sense the Jews supposed and feared, but were being fulfilled; they were simply blossoming out and ripening into their proper fruitage and glory.

Christianity was not a revolution but an evolution. It did not destroy Judaism any more than the flower destroys the root when it blooms; it superseded it only as noonday splendor supersedes morning twilight.

The same process has been going on through all the Christian centuries and is still in operation as new truth enlarges and illuminates old views.

We may be needlessly alarmed as we see changes going on in the church and in the world of religious truth as though the new were destroying the old and sweeping away the very substance and spirit of Christianity, when the fact may be that Christ is only revealing the many things he yet has to say unto us and is thus guiding us into larger truth as his Holy Spirit takes of his things and shews them unto us in clearer light and fuller meaning and wider application (John 16:12–15).

### *3. A Transfigured Face*

As the charges were being made against Stephen, the members of the council fastened their eyes on him and saw an unexpected and wonderful sight. His face grew transfigured before them and became as it had been the face of an angel.

Stephen seems to have discerned that his hour was come and that his blood would be the first to baptize the church. Some great thought or passion kindled his soul into flames that shone through his flesh and lit it up with heavenly radiance.

The man was so nearly pure spirit that his body was the thinnest possible veil that could scarcely contain and conceal the burning inner glory.

The human spirit has this power of overmastering and transfiguring the body until it glows with a strange light. Daniel Webster for several hours after delivering his great oration at Bunker Hill wore a grand expression that awed those who came into his presence, the face of Moses shone when he came down from the Mount, and the hidden glory in Jesus was unloosed on the Mount of Transfiguration and steeped him in splendor.

With his soul thus aflame, Stephen began his defence. His long address

is one of the most notable speeches in the Bible and repays careful study and analysis.

**The drift of its argument is proof from Scripture that God did not always confine himself to the holy land and sacred places but went outside of these in revealing himself.**

The address was broken off before Stephen had completed his argument, so that its logic and conclusion are not always apparent, but his main line is clear. By his whole handling of the history he makes it plain that he is not hostile to Moses and is a loyal Jew. But he shows that God had not confined his grace to any one "place" and "custom" but had revealed himself in many places and through many prophets.

**Interwoven with this truth, it was also shown that these prophets had been rejected by the same narrow and ungrateful spirit that was then intensifying itself into final hardness of heart.**

At this point Stephen seems to have seen his judges stiffening themselves against the truth in unbelief and rage, and he cut his address short with a terrible arraignment of their guilt in betraying and murdering the Righteous One.

**This may seem to be a story and tragedy far off from us, and yet essentially the same scene in spirit may be in process of enactment in our own souls.**

**We are every one of us ever rendering our decision and giving our testimony for or against this same Jesus as the fulfillment of the customs of Moses and the Saviour of the world.**

### *4. Murderous Stones*

This rapturous speech of Stephen was too much for his judges, and, stopping their ears that they might not hear the hateful words, with shouts of rage they rushed upon him and, in violation of Roman law, hurried him through the gate of the city to the place of stoning.

Here they stripped themselves for their bloody business, and just at this point in this dark hour a new name appears on the pages of Scripture, which, though it rises red as blood in the gloom, yet presently shines out as one of

the most splendid stars in all the firmament of human history. "The witnesses laid down their garments at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."

**In this incriminating attitude is first seen him who afterwards so powerfully preached the faith he here attempted to destroy.**

But Stephen's doctrines and death-cries entered into Saul's soul, and we know not what potent influence they had in changing Saul into Paul. God uses all kinds of means and often strange ones in working out his purposes.

The murderous stones now flew hurtling through the air and Stephen was quickly struck down. The spirit of the Master shone out in the martyr in wonderful power and beauty. The two expiring cries of Stephen are almost literal echoes from the cross which were uttered very near to this very place.

First he commended his spirit to the Lord Jesus. He had served him in life and now he trusted him in death, and he could look for no higher reward and glory than to go to him and forever be with him.

**Every soul shall go to its own place, whither its spiritual affinity draws it, and heaven is eternal kinship and companionship with Jesus.**

But the martyr, like his Master, could not leave the world without praying for the very enemies that were guilty of sending him so cruelly out of the world. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

How like the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." What a triumph of the grace and power of Christ that could draw from the bleeding lips and choking voice of the mangled and expiring martyr such a self-forgetful, forgiving, noble prayer as this?

**How the breadth and splendor of his charity reveal and rebuke the narrowness and meanness and enmity and grudges and spite that we often entertain and even cherish toward one another!**

"And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

**How greatly is Stephen's spirit needed in our churches, and how it would inspire them with faith and power.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How did offices arise in the early church?
2. What was the office of deacon, and what is its work in our churches?
3. What are the outstanding traits on the character of Stephen?
4. What were the charges brought against Stephen? In what sense were they untrue and in what sense were they true?
5. What should be our attitude towards growing truths?
6. At what points and in what ways is this same story being reënacted in our day?
7. What would Stephen's spirit do if it pervaded our churches?

# LESSON IX.—AUGUST 26

## BARNABAS THE GREAT-HEARTED

### Christian Characteristics Illustrated by Barnabas

*Golden Text: He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.* Acts 11:24.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 96:1–10.

**Reference Material:** Acts 14:1–18.

***Lesson Passages: Acts 4:36–37; 9:26–30; 11:19–30; 12:25; 13:1—15:1 35–41; Gal. 2:13***

***Lesson Text: Acts 4:36–37; 11:19–30***

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus,
37 Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

19 ¶ Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.
20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.
21 And the hand of the LORD was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the LORD.
22 ¶ Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.
23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the LORD.
24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the LORD.
25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:
26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.
27 ¶ And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.
28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.
29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea:
30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Barnabas, Son of Consolation.***

***2. Antioch.***

***3. Revolutionary Preaching in Antioch.***
***4. Barnabas Sent to Investigate.***
***5. Barnabas Sends for Saul.***
***6. A New Name Appears.***

We are now about to witness the gospel taking its flight from Jerusalem and starting out for the uttermost parts of the earth. The eagle, having been released from its shell, cannot be confined to its nest or to its native crag, but commits its wings to the boundless blue and flies in the face of the sun.

Christianity was no local cult or racial religion to be tethered on its mountain top in Jerusalem, but it was and is a world religion that acknowledges no limiting boundaries and stops only with the equator and the poles.

The work of bursting the Jewish husks in which it grew was done by certain outstanding personalities, chief among whom were Stephen, Barnabas and Paul.

Great personalities are the mountain ranges and peaks of history that lift the level and determine the contours of the continents, and it is so in the history of religion.

### *1. Barnabas, Son of Consolation*

When in the fresh enthusiasm of the Christian converts following the great revival at Pentecost they brought their goods and cast them in a common heap for equal distribution among them all, Barnabas appears, bearing a name that meant "The son of consolation."

Names were significant of personality and character with the Jews, and this name designates the nature and spirit of Barnabas as a man of such kindliness and helpfulness that he gave comfort to others in all his relations with them; and this character is borne out in all his subsequent history.

Another fact is mentioned in this connection that throws a strong light upon him. He was one of those that "having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet."

**His charity did not consist in fine words and fair promises, but it expressed itself in solid deeds.**

He was willing to count nothing his own and to share his money and goods in common with others. The mark of sterling honesty is upon him in this transaction. Some others, such as the notorious Ananias and Sapphira, tried to get the popularity of such action while withholding part of the price, but Barnabas paid down all the money he had received for his land, and his practice fully backed up his profession.

**Good men, amiable and kind in disposition, are sometimes weak in the more fundamental virtues of truth and honesty, but Barnabas had no such superficial goodness that went no deeper than veneering and paint, and his virtue went down to the core of his character and the polished surface of his beauty only showed the solid wood.**

### *2. Antioch*

The echoes of the great persecution in the days of Stephen long reverberated through the world. That violent explosion shot flying embers of the church far and wide and we find them at many points around the Mediterranean shore.

**One of these points stands out conspicuous as one of the most important centers in the spread of Christianity.**

Antioch at this time was a city of half a million people and was the third city in the world, Rome being first and Alexandria second. It was situated three hundred miles north of Jerusalem on the river Orontes, twenty miles from the sea. As it was the political capital of Syria and a center of commerce and art, it was a city of great wealth and architectural magnificence. It had many fine temples and theaters, a main street running through the heart of the city four miles from east to west, paved and lined on each side with two rows of columns, and walls, aqueducts and bridges, of which the massive ruins remain to this day.

While it was third in rank as a city, it was first in corruption and vice. Near it was the famous grove of Daphne, ten miles in circumference, an immense pleasure establishment that was a plague spot to all the world. Here vice was cultivated as a fine art and sensuality as a form of religion.

**So infamous and infectious was its evil influence that even Rome complained that the Syrian Orontes befouled the Roman Tiber. Yet in this hotbed of vice grew the white flower of Gentile Christianity.**

Antioch became a Christian center next in importance only to Jerusalem itself. It was the first strategic point seized in the Gentile world and was made the base of missionary campaigns northward through Asia Minor and westward through Europe.

**It has always been the instinct and plan of the gospel to plant itself first in the cities and work out from them as centers; and however wicked the city in which we live, or evil the influences that surround us, we can grow in it the white blossom of a pure life.**

### *3. Revolutionary Preaching in Antioch*

To this city of Antioch came certain of the scattered disciples and began to preach the Lord Jesus to the Greeks.

**This announcement marks a radical departure and revolutionary preaching.**

Hitherto the disciples had "spoken the word to none but unto the Jews only." They had been working on the theory that the gospel was for the Jews only and had nothing to do with the uncircumcised Gentiles.

This idea was at first universally held among the Jewish Christians as a matter of course. But we have seen how this whole history has been the gradual breaking down of this theory point by point.

Stephen began the work of preaching a broader view, and here and there we have seen Gentiles converted and baptized. But these were only isolated cases that fell in the way of the apostles and in a degree were forced upon them.

**Here this momentous fact first appears and stands out in acknowledged publicity and right.**

These disciples deliberately and openly preached the Lord Jesus to the Greeks, the heathen residents in Antioch. All distinctions between Jew

and Gentile had been obliterated from their minds and they saw and seized the great truth that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all men without regard to their rank or race or religion. Uncircumcision was no longer a bar in the way of conversion. The ceremonial law was gone and grace had come. Moses was no longer master, and Jesus was Lord of all.

**The Gospel was now getting well out of its Judaistic shell and was growing wings to fly to the ends of the earth. Christianity was no longer a Jewish sect, but was asserting itself as a universal religion. The battle was not yet fully won, but it was far on towards victory.**

It is remarkable that this revolutionary policy was not inaugurated by the church authorities up at Jerusalem or by ordained apostles or deacons, but by unordained and unauthorized laymen. Certain men from Cyprus and Cyrene, points far from the seat and source of Christianity, began this business, apparently of their own accord, moved by the wider and freer spirit that was bred in the hearts of those out on the field of heathenism and knew its needs.

**This principle has been frequently exemplified in the history of the church.**

Great movements, such as the Reformation in Germany, the Wesleyan revival in England, the Sunday school and the Salvation Army, did not originate with ecclesiastical authorities, but with unofficial ministers and laymen and among the common people.

The human heads of the church, as represented by popes and bishops, conferences and assemblies, are generally conservative and often obstructive, and the Holy Spirit usually pours in new life and grows new organs of operation and progress down among the people.

**Often new movements start far from the original centers of faith. It is the spirit of Christian unity that develops among our foreign missionaries and native Christians that broadens our views and brings our churches closer together at home.**

### *4. Barnabas Sent to Investigate*

The news of what was going on down in Antioch soon came up into the ears of the church in Jerusalem and must have created no small excite-

ment and discussion there. To the conservative orthodox party it seemed revolutionary and destructive. We are not given an insight into their counsels, but it was determined to send a committee to Antioch to look into the situation.

**Church authorities do not ordinarily start new movements, but they usually want to manage them after they are started, and this is right and necessary, provided they sympathetically guide them and do not try to obstruct and strangle them.**

The Jerusalem church was fortunate and manifestly led by divine wisdom in the choice of its commissioner to Antioch. Barnabas was chosen. He was himself from Cyprus, not far from Antioch, and thus qualified to understand the people and the conditions in that city.

**Better still "he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," and was therefore a man of broad and warm sympathies whose goodness of heart enabled him to understand and appreciate men and movements that a rigid logician and narrow ecclesiastic would have quickly run foul of and condemned. He was a good man and therefore quick to see good.**

When he came to Antioch he saw the grace of God. A differently constituted man might have seen something to suspect and criticize and even to brand with the dreadful name of heresy, but Barnabas saw grace.

**If we have grace in ourselves we shall be apt to see grace in others.**

And Barnabas was glad and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. He saw that the new policy was inspired of God and he urged it forward; and yet he endeavored to guard it from ephemeral enthusiasm and to guide it along solid and permanent lines.

**When we have such men in our churches and church courts, differences and dissensions will be adjusted and harmonized in the spirit of truth and grace and kindness and courtesy, and the gospel will have freer course and be glorified.**

### *5. Barnabas Goes after Saul*

The work grew and Barnabas soon needed help. Not far around the Mediterranean shore from Antioch was Tarsus, Saul's home, where he was staying. Barnabas went after him.

These two men had been together before. When Saul after his conversion came up to Jerusalem and tried to join the disciples, they were afraid of him, but Barnabas took him up and stood by him (Acts 9:26–27).

**If there was any good in a man, Barnabas was sure to find it out and he soon knew Saul.**

Barnabas thus introduced Saul to his great work as the apostle to the Gentiles. These two men were very different in their personal constitution and gifts. Barnabas was a man of heart, feeling and enthusiasm, and Paul was a man of mind, thought and logic.

**Both of these men were needed on that field, and they worked together in harmony. There is room in Christian life and service for all types and temperaments, and, having gifts differing, we should work and dwell together in unity as the various members of the one body of Christ.**

### *6. A New Name Appears*

At this point a new name appears in the record that shines as a star whose lustre has brightened with increasing ages and shall never be dimmed. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

This name was not assumed by the disciples and, it has been thought, was first applied to them in ridicule. Not in Jerusalem, but down in the Greek city of Antioch, famous for its witty nicknames, was the new name invented. The Greek idlers, seeing that the new religionists were followers of a certain Jew named Christ, called them Christians in derision and contempt. Possibly the designation was considered a happy hit and was greeted with bursts of laughter.

**But a new word was born that day into the vocabulary of the human tongue that was destined to live for all time. Like many another word spoken in ridicule, it has become a mark of honor and**

shines above every other name given among men. It may have been a derisive contemptuous jest, but it now sparkles as one of the most precious gems in the vast heap of words that men have piled up; it runs as a glittering thread of gold through all the web of human speech.

Those Greek jesters spoke better than they knew and we thank them for their word. But now that we have the name, we should strive to live up towards it.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the city of Antioch.
2. Sketch the principal points in the character of Barnabas.
3. What was the significance of the new preaching in Antioch?
4. What did Barnabas find and do in Antioch?
5. What were the relations of Barnabas and Saul?
6. What does the name Christian mean?

# LESSON X.—SEPTEMBER 2

## PAUL THE APOSTLE

### Paul's Contribution to Christianity

*Golden Text: I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Phil. 3:14.

**Devotional Reading:** Isaiah 6:1–8.

**Reference Material:** Rom. 1:9–17; 15:15–21; II Cor. 11:1–12:10; II Tim. 4.

***Lesson Passages: Acts 7:54–8:3; 9:1–31; 11:25–30; 13–28; Phil. 3:4–14***

***Lesson Text: Acts 22:3, 6–10; Phil. 3:7–14***

3 I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and* taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, LORD? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10 And I said, What shall I do, LORD? And the LORD said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my LORD: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

## LESSON PLAN

*Introduction.*
1. *Saul on the Way to Damascus.*
2. *The Heavenly Vision.*
3. *Loss That Was Gain.*
4. *Reaching Forward.*

We have seen how the gospel was bursting its Jewish bonds and attaining its liberty and setting out on its world march. Stephen and Barnabas caught this vision and began this liberation, but the masterful personality that carried this mighty revolution to triumph was the apostle Paul, who now tells us the story of his conversion.

**This epochal event in his life burnt itself deep into his brain, and left a vivid impression that he never could forget or misunderstand or confuse its solid objective reality with any subjective illusion or delusion.**

The story is told three times in chapters 9, 22 and 26 of the Acts, and he never tires of it himself and the world is still studying it with unabated interest.

Black carbon may be transmuted into white diamond, the wickedest sinner may be converted into the holiest saint, and Saul, the deadliest persecutor of the gospel, became its most powerful apostle and greatest preacher.

**The story of his conversion is one of the most interesting pages in the history of Christianity and remains to this day one of its epochal events.**

### *1. On the Way to Damascus*

At first Saul was the bitter enemy of Christ and his gospel. An intensely orthodox Jew in birth and blood and training, a graduate of one of the theological universities in Jerusalem in which he had sat at the feet and imbibed the spirit of Gamaliel, one of the masters of Judaism, "taught according to the perfect manner of the fathers, and zealous toward God," the very incarnation of Jewish blindness and bigotry against any new theology and

especially the new theology of the gospel, his soul blazed with zeal and hatred against the disciples of Jesus and he breathed fire.

His presence in Jerusalem made that sacred mountain top a flaming volcano that scorched and burnt the faith that soon would have made it blossom with new life. Presently the holy city was a cinder, practically bare of the gospel. The disciples, except the apostles, were mostly dead or fled or in hiding.

But Saul was not satisfied. He considered the new Way of worshipping a most dangerous and deadly heresy which must be destroyed, root and branch. He would make thorough work of it and not leave the smallest germ in the most distant city to sprout and spread.

He had heard of, or suspected, the presence of believers in Damascus and, armed with authority from the priests, he set out for that ancient city that he might search it and bring any men or women tainted with heresy bound to Jerusalem. It took Saul a week to journey on a horse or camel from Jerusalem 140 miles northward to Damascus.

This must have been a time of cooling down and quiet meditation in his fiery soul. The excitement and passion of his work in Jerusalem had subsided and he found himself out in the solitude and silence of the desert under the solemn Syrian stars.

**Conscience began to consider.**

If there was any still small voice in him, it now had a chance to be heard. Possibly the expiring prayer of Stephen strangely awoke and rang through his soul. He unexpectedly found himself troubled over his work. He was surprised to find his convictions were not so unanimous and solid as he had supposed. Cracks and fractures began to cleave his conscience into doubts. He felt himself on the eve of an impending crisis; already conscience was ripe for revolt.

This view of his psychological condition is not explicitly disclosed in the record, but it is in accordance with human experience and it is suggested by the statement in his narrative that "as I made my journey" the crisis came.

**Conversion is hardly ever a sudden event, but it usually has deep roots running back through life to early childhood.**

And when one is protesting most boldly and violently his opposition to Christ and Christianity he may be near a sudden collapse and conversion.

Many a man has gone to a revival meeting to scoff and has remained to pray.

**There is such a thing as "protesting too much." Saul seems to have been doing that in raging against Jesus, and men may still have the same experience and do the same thing.**

### *2. The Heavenly Vision*

Upon this thoughtful troubled man conversion fell. Damascus was near and decision could not be delayed. The Holy Spirit found him trembling upon the point of doubt and bore down upon him at this critical moment.

As in all conversions, human and divine elements were interblended and worked together. There were spectacular features in this case that were supernatural and unique, but the same essential principles work in every converted soul.

A blinding blaze of light burnt through the sky above him and the proud persecutor was unhorsed. A voice was then heard saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

This was probably the very question that was troubling Saul himself. The Spirit touched the sorest point in his conscience, piercing his sin.

**It is generally some form of this question that presses upon the soul in conversion. What is our relation to Jesus? Are we persecuting him, or pleasing him?**

Saul answered, "Who are thou Lord?" Already he seems to know the person addressing him as his Lord. At least he is in an attitude of honest inquiry; he wants to know the truth and to such a soul the truth shall come.

A wonderful answer was given to this inquiry: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." This was a startling revelation and might well have struck terror into Saul's soul. But he was fast falling into an attitude of faith and obedience.

"What shall I do, Lord?" was now his inquiry. Already his resistless energies were being reversed and were eager to flow in the channel of service for Jesus.

And the answer came, "Arise, and go into Damascus." Not another word about the persecution, but only words of kindness and guidance and promise were spoken to the prostrate humbled man. Saul's sin was overwhelmed with God's mercy and washed away in a flood of grace.

Does not this startling conversion contain and vividly illustrate the essential elements of all conversions? Christ comes not to judge us, but to save us, and when we turn to him in penitence and faith our sin is forgiven and forgotten as though it were cast into the depths of the sea.

This was " the heavenly vision " which Saul saw, and Christ comes as a heavenly vision to every one of us.

The attendants of Saul saw the light but did not understand the voice. Every soul has experiences in conversion that are hidden from others. They may see and hear outward signs, but they cannot hear the voices that are heard in the heart.

This manifestation of the risen Jesus to Saul is one of the " many infallible proofs " which are built as buttresses around the resurrection of Jesus.

Paul was no emotional enthusiast or visionary that would be liable to mistake subjective imagination for objective reality, but was eminently a man of logical mind and sane judgment, and his positive and thrice-repeated attestation of this fact assures us that he believed in " no cunningly devised fable," but rested on the rock of historical reality.

### *3. Increasing Light*

Saul's conversion was now begun but was not complete; he had passed the turning point, but had yet many steps to take. The voice bade him rise and enter the city where he would receive further directions.

Conversion does not answer all questions and clear up all difficulties. It usually makes plain only a few steps which on being taken will lead us to more light.

Saul took these few steps; he rose from the earth and went into the city. He immediately obeyed his newly found Lord, threw his will into the current of his Master's will and turned his faith into faithfulness.

There was much that he did not know, he could not yet see, he was led by the hand like a child in the dark; but one thing he did know, that Jesus was his Lord, and his soul was forever set in its purpose to trust and obey him.

**This is the perfection of faith, not to know many things, to be led by the hand through thick darkness, yet to trust our Lord and follow on.**

This blindness continued with Saul three days, during which he neither ate nor drank. His conversion did not issue in immediate light and peace and joy, but rather led him into darkness. The storm that broke upon him in such violence could not suddenly subside. The great deeps of his soul had been stirred and they continued to surge and sob for many hours.

These were doubtless days of profound self-examination and meditation Saul sat alone with himself and thought upon his ways. The past was full of pain, and the future of problems. Perhaps doubts still shot through his faith and he had wrestlings and agonies. He wanted to be sure of himself and of his Lord, and he fought every doubt through to victory. In fact, he took three years to think this matter through when he buried himself in silence down in Arabia.

But through all this darkness he simply followed the Lord's will, and obedience brought him into the light. Conversion is not always immediate peace, but sometimes brings pain. Doubt plunges the soul into deeper darkness.

**But light always lies forward and not backward, and it is only by following on to know the Lord that our path will grow bright and shine more and more unto the perfect day.**

### *4. A Leaf from Paul's Letters*

Our lesson contains a leaf from one of Paul's letters. These letters taken together constitute an autobiography of Paul, especially of his inner life.

Philippi was the first city in Europe in which Paul preached the gospel, and this letter was written to his friends in that place when Paul was a prisoner in Rome. In this passage he had just been giving a catalogue of the things he might be proud and boast of as an orthodox Jew, "but what things were gain to me," he says, "those I counted loss for Christ."

Paul had occupied a high position as an influential leader in the Jewish church and zealous defender of its orthodoxy, but he sacrificed all his possessions and influence and counted them but loss that he might win Christ.

He had a true sense of the relative values of things and knew that the righteousness which is of God by faith is infinitely of higher worth than all earthly honors.

With him to know Christ and the power of his resurrection as a living fact and force in his life was a passion, the center of his life that drew every point on its far-flung circumference into its position and bound all his days and deeds into unity and purpose and power.

Like most great men Paul compressed the swift and torrential current of his life into one narrow channel. He was a man of one idea and "this one thing I do" was the master motive of his life.

Many a person dissipates his time and strength in a distraction of many trivial objects and pursuits, but Paul was a man of intense concentration and this was one secret of his power. He cut his channel through his day and generation and down through the Christian centuries as mountain streams cut their way through canyons down to the sea.

Concentration is necessary to success in any line, and it should unify and energize our Christian character and service.

Yet great as he was, Paul felt that he was only a beginner in Christian attainment. He never dreamed that he was already perfect, but was ever following after his ideal of apprehending Christ. He was ever forgetting that which was behind, both his successes and his failures, neither being proud and boastful of the one, nor discouraged by the other, but he was reaching forth unto those things which were before.

Paul was a forward-looking man and ever pressed toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The things before were a larger outlook upon the world, a clearer vision, a deeper faith and trust, a closer intimacy with Christ, and a more fruitful service in extending his kingdom in the world.

These were the stars that ever lured him on and lifted him up, and they are still the greatest and brightest stars that shine in our sky.

His spirit of faith and obedience, his bravery, his pioneer labors and his letters, —these were Paul's contribution to Christianity.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What was Saul's probable state of mind when he was on his way to Damascus?
2. What were the principal points in Saul's conversion?
3. What is the special value of Paul's conversion in the history of Christianity?
4. What steps do we need to take after conversion?
5. How did Paul carry out his master purpose to know Christ?
6. In what ways should we forget the past and reach forward to the things before us? What are the greatest things before us?
7. What were Paul's contributions to Christianity?

# LESSON XI.—SEPTEMBER 9

## JOHN MARK

### Mark's Contribution to Christianity

*Golden Text: Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.* Ecclesiastes 9:10.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 32:1–7.

**Reference Material:** Mark 14:51–52; Col. 4: 10.

***Lesson Passages: Acts 12:12, 25–13:13; 15:36–40; Col. 4:10; II Tim. 4:11; I Pet. 5:13***

***Lesson Text: Acts 12:12, 25–13:5; 15:36–40; II Tim. 4:11***

12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the LORD, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

4 ¶ So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to *their* minister.

36 ¶ And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the LORD, *and see* how they do.

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the minstry.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. John Mark.***

***2. A Call to Wider Missionary Work.***

*3. Obedience to the Call.*
*4. The First Missionary Tour.*
*5. A Sharp Personal Conflict.*
*6. Reconciliation.*

A new chapter now opens in the history of Christianity, and again we are surprised to find that it opens not in Jerusalem but in Antioch. Jerusalem was the seat of conservatism, and the Holy Spirit had to start a new center of progress.

The kingdom of God cannot be shut up within any particular place or church or creed, but has unbounded and irresistible expansive power and breaks out in unexpected places and ways.

Antioch, which gave birth to the first Gentile church, became the mother of foreign missions and of Gentile Christianity. The gospel has wonderful self-propagating power, and every additional church becomes a new center for its further sprouting and spread.

Yet this new chapter is marred by some unhappy exhibitions of human nature, for the church has its full share of this ill-tempered stuff, and the Holy Spirit has to work with some contentious people even in carrying on foreign missions.

### *1. John Mark*

John Mark, John being his Hebrew and Mark his Roman name, slips in and out of this lesson and appears at various points in the New Testament. Peter on his release from prison (Acts 12:12) "came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying," and this is our first glimpse of this young man who played an important part in the gospel story.

His mother was evidently a woman of means whose house was a center for these early disciples and was of sufficient size to accommodate a considerable company. The curious incident recorded in Mark 14:51–52, which is of so private a nature that it could hardly be known to any one but the young man himself, "is naturally interpreted as a personal experience of the evangelist, as his signature to his portrait of Jesus."

He was thus brought up in Jerusalem, receiving the education of a young

Jew of a wealthy family in the university city, and with his mother became an early convert to Christianity.

He only appears at scattered points in the narrative of the New Testament, but he was associated with the leading apostles, Barnabas and Paul and Peter, and thus acquired that intimate knowledge that prepared him for the great work that God in his providence and through his Holy Spirit assigned to him in writing his gospel, the first written gospel that has come down to us.

### *2. A Call to Wider Missionary Work*

That was a strong church down in Antioch; it had prophets and teachers that were men of power. Two of them, Barnabas and Saul, were eminent leaders in the church at large, and one of them, Manaen, was connected with an influential family in the political world.

The church has abundant room in it for the common people, but it must also get hold of the best brains. Not many mighty may be called, but some of them are and must be.

While the members and officers of this church were engaged in serving the Lord in worship the Holy Spirit came upon them with a call to further service. Faithfulness in present duty is ever the opening way to further enlargement.

When the Lord wants a man for important business he picks out one that is already busy. The man that is doing no good where he is would probably do no good anywhere.

The call of the Spirit was, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

A new line of work was about to be opened and men specially fitted had to be specially set apart to this service.

The principle of the division of labor with special fitness for special tasks, which is so powerful in the industrial world, is equally operative and fruitful in spiritual work. God does not send men into service in-

discriminately, but he separates them and puts every man at the right post.

**Every one of us has a divine calling that matches this personal gift and situation, and it is our business to find this work and do with our might what God has given us to do.**

**If we ask why it is that so many men are out of spiritual work or are misfits where they are, the failure and fault must be found in unwillingness to find or to do the work which God has appointed unto them.**

### *3. Obedience to the Call*

How did the church receive this call? "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

**Immediate obedience followed the call of the Spirit.**

We might have expected some doubt and opposition. Barnabas and Saul were the two ablest men in the church: how plausible and strong would be the plea that they were needed at home. Was not Antioch a great city and center that ought to be seized and conquered for Christ before any further work should be undertaken? And how could this be done if the ablest men were sent away? If this policy was suggested it did not prevail, but the divine call was trusted and followed.

The Spirit did pick out the two strongest men in that church to send them as foreign missionaries, and this has been the divine policy to this day.

**The foreign field is no place for weak men: let the church send there her strongest and most gifted sons and daughters.**

**It seemed a poor use and needless sacrifice of Paul to bury him in the obscurity and darkness of superstitious heathenism, but it was the same kind of sacrifice as that by which a grain of wheat falls into the ground to spring up a hundred fold, and Christian Europe is its splendid fruit and justification today.**

### *4. The First Missionary Tour*

"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed unto Cyprus." The narrative interblends human

and divine action in one statement, in one verse attributing their departure to the church and in the next verse to the Holy Ghost.

**The Christian is in all things a coworker with God, so that he lives and yet not he, but Christ liveth in him.**

Seleucia was the seaport of Antioch, twenty miles down the Orontes at its mouth. Possibly members of the church went with the departing missionaries as far as this port, where they bade them farewell and saw them disappear on board a corn ship on the blue Mediterranean.

They sailed westward, for this has been the course of empire in the spiritual, as in the political, kingdom until it has encircled the globe. John Mark was with them as attendant. A sail of eighty miles brought them to Cyprus, the native island of Barnabas, where they began work.

They first preached the word of God to the Jews in accordance with their policy from the beginning. They tried to find common ground on which they could stand with others, they seized upon the best point of approach to the heathen world.

**This principle runs through all Paul's missionary campaigns, and it is the wise policy of foreign missionaries to this day.**

They worked their way westward through the island without anything of note happening until they came to Paphos, at its western extremity. Here lived the proconsul Sergius Paulus. He was a man of serious thought and spiritual aspiration who hungered for something better than was offered by the effete Roman religion. He was some such man as Cornelius, possibly another wild-growing saint, and there appears to have been many such in the Roman empire, and foreign missionaries find them yet out in the heathen world.

**God has more souls waiting for him in heathen darkness than we know or suspect.**

When Sergius heard of the missionaries preaching a new message of salvation he sent for them to come up to his palace and desired to hear the word of God. Here was a most unexpected and promising opening, and it must have been with great hope and gladness that Barnabas and Saul declared to him the way of life.

But an unexpected obstacle was also encountered. Lurking in the shadow of Sergius they found his evil spirit and tempter, one Bar-jesus, a sorcerer. He was an apostate Jew that had gone into the business of fortune telling and magic. He had fastened himself on Sergius, and, playing on his fears and hopes, had got him under his evil influence.

When he saw that Sergius was listening to the missionaries and that he was likely to lose so profitable a customer and victim, he used all his cunning lying arts to discredit the preachers and turn the proconsul away from the faith.

**Thus the first missionary campaign soon struck a rock, and missions always have been and will be a battle. We must not expect smooth sailing and easy marching in Christian work, but be ready for opposition and attack.**

**Every good man has his tempter that tries to stifle every message from God and accent of the Holy Spirit.**

Paul, who at this point forges ahead and takes precedence of Barnabas in the narrative, unmasked the smooth villainies of the tempter, branded him whose name was Son of Saviour as a son of the devil, and he was stricken with blindness.

**Trying to blind another, he was blinded himself. What he tried to give, he received. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.**

### *5. A Sharp Personal Conflict*

When the missionaries "loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem" (Acts 13: 13). At this point, then, Mark left Paul and Barnabas and went back home.

Why he did this is not intimated in the narrative, and various conjectures have been made as to his motive, such as that he may have thought that Paul was crowding Barnabas, who was his uncle (Col. 4:10), out of the leadership of the party; or that he thought the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles was being carried too far; or that he lost his nerve and could not further endure the hardship of the tour.

Whatever was Mark's reason, Paul did not forget this act when they had returned to Antioch and were preparing for a second missionary journey over the same ground. Barnabas wanted to take Mark along, but Paul

opposed this and "the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other."

Paul believed that as Mark had proved unfaithful once, he should not be tried again; Barnabas, true to his good heart, believed that the young man should be given a second chance. We cannot decide which was right or wrong in the case, probably there was some truth on both sides, but our sympathies naturally lean towards the side of Barnabas.

**We should not be too severe and unrelenting towards those that have failed, but stretch our patience and charity so as to give them a further chance.**

**This second chance has saved many a man, and we all need to be dealt with mercifully.**

So these apostles were quite human and had their quarrels, but their dissension fell out to the furthering of the gospel, for Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, and Paul took Silas and struck up through Asia Minor, and so two missionary expeditions instead of one set out from Antioch on account of this quarrel.

**God can turn our very wrath to his praise, but this does not excuse our strife and division.**

### *6. Reconciliation*

Our lesson closes with a pathetic passage from one of Paul's last letters. He was in Rome in prison, an old and broken and lonely man. He is writing in his cell to his beloved Timothy, who was then probably at Ephesus. There is deep pathos in the words, "Only Luke is with me." His heart is crying out in its loneliness.

He bids Timothy take Mark, "pick him up" somewhere between Ephesus and Rome, and bring him along. Reconciliation had taken place before this, for we find Mark with Paul in Rome at an earlier time (Col. 4:10). We are not informed as to the time and circumstances of this restored friendship, but it is pleasant to find that it had been brought about.

**It would be painful to think that the aged Paul and the author of Mark's gospel went out of the world in strained relations.**

**The spirit of Christ was in them both and this bound them into common love and life. "First be reconciled to thy brother."**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How much do we know about John Mark?
2. What calls to wider service are coming to the church today?
3. Who should be willing to go as foreign missionaries?
4. Give a brief account of Paul's first missionary journey.
5. In what ways should we give others a second chance?
6. How should we obtain reconciliation with estranged friends or enemies?
7. What was Mark's contribution to Christianity?

# LESSON XII.—SEPTEMBER 16

## LUKE THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN

### Luke's Contribution to Christianity

*Golden Text: A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* Proverbs 17:17.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 91:9–16.

**Reference Material:** Acts 20:5–21; 19; 27–28.

***Lesson Passages: Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1–5; 16:9–18; Col. 4:14; I Tim. 4:11***

***Lesson Text: Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1; 16:9–15; Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4:11***

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,
2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;
3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,
4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.
10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the LORD had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.
11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next *day* to Neapolis;
12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and* a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.
13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*.
14 ¶ And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us:* whose heart the LORD opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.
15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the LORD, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

## LESSON PLAN

*Introduction,*
1. *Luke's Prefaces.*
2. *A Night Vision.*
3. *A Prayer Meeting by a River Side.*
4. *A Certain Woman.*
5. *Luke the Beloved.*

Although this lesson has Luke for its subject, yet he appears in it only incidentally and its main subject is a continuation of Paul's missionary work in which he takes the gigantic stride out of Asia into Europe, one of the most momentous crossings in history.

### *1. Luke's Prefaces*

A preface is usually one of the most interesting and valuable parts of a volume as in it the author takes us into his confidence and tells us how he came to write his work, what were the sources of his information and especially what was his purpose in composing it.

Luke's preface to his gospel runs true to this literary form and is of the greatest value as certifying the sufficiency and validity of his sources.

He tells us that many eye-witnesses of the facts as to the origin of the gospel had written down their accounts of them, and these earliest gospels, which have not been preserved but would be of the greatest value if they were discovered, were in his possession, so that he had written documents which were practically contemporary with the events and therefore of the highest historical trustworthiness.

He further tells us that he had investigated the facts in the case from the beginning for himself and set about writing a systematic account of the events in order to strengthen the faith of his friend Theophilus, who appears to have been a Roman official of some standing.

All this is material and fact of the highest importance in assuring us of the validity of the gospel history, and so this charming little preface is one of the most precious parts of Luke's beautiful book.

The Book of Acts in its preface is addressed or dedicated to the same friend as the Gospel of Luke and is written by the same systematic and scholarly writer. The former treatise contained all that Jesus began to do and teach. Jesus only began his work and did not end it. Even in his teachings he did not tell all that he knew or say all that he had to say, but left many things yet to be said.

If Jesus himself did not say everything and construct a complete and final system of theology, it is folly for us to try. Attempts at completeness in our creeds are futile, and finalities are fatal. We must always leave room for more truth and growth.

But though Jesus only began and did not say all, yet he said enough to give light upon our path and make plain the way of salvation.

### *2. A Night Vision*

When Paul in his second missionary journey had revisited the churches he had established in this region, he was ready to strike out into new fields and seize new strategic centers.

At Troas a vision swept down upon him in the night. A man of Macedonia stood beseeching him with the cry, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us."

Where Paul's journey seemed to have ended in night it suddenly blossomed out into a vision; and where our path runs into darkness we may find the clearest guidance and the widest enlargement.

Visions are still hovering around us to catch our attention and coax and woo us into better things. Any call to duty and opening into service is a vision shining in our sky.

This Macedonian was a representative man and his call is the pathetic cry of the heathen world. The Holy Spirit is out there in the darkness and is moving many hearts to call upon us for help.

This man is still calling, only he has moved on and now stands on the shore of India and Africa. The church that cannot hear this man is so deaf that it is spiritually dead.

The call to help others is one mark of a heavenly vision. Earthly visions lure us on to wealth and worldly splendor and thus call us to

**help ourselves, but a vision born of the Spirit of God calls us to help others, not only those near by us, but also those far off, even beyond the sea. Trust such a vision: it is born of some better spirit than human selfishness and sweeps down upon us out of the sky.**

Paul trusted and obeyed. "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we (notice the change from 'he' to 'we,' for here Luke joins the company and steps into his narrative) sought to go into Macedonia." "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19) was his testimony of a former vision, and such obedience with him had grown into an unconscious habit.

**When Paul knew the Lord's will and way, he did not hesitate or delay or debate about it, but instantly acted and turned the vision into verity. There was no gap between his conscience and his conduct, but the two coincided and flowed together.**

This instinctive habit of obedience to divine impulses consolidated Paul's conscience and character and conduct into unbroken unity and gave him masterful power. Such a habit makes a man strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

**The reason we do not see more visions is that we do not obey the visions we do see. Every vision disobeyed blinds us to the next one.**

So Paul and his three companions sailed from Troas across the Aegean sea to Neapolis, and passed on up to Philippi, an important Roman city of Macedonia. In crossing this arm of the sea these travelers crossed a more momentous Rubicon than Caesar ever saw; this sail of a few hours marks one of the greatest epochs of history.

**In passing from Troas to Philippi the gospel passed from Asia to Europe and set out upon its worldwide march; a new continent was here annexed to the kingdom of Christ; the star of spiritual empire here started westward and then kept on moving until it has now encircled the globe.**

**When we set out under divine guidance following heavenly**

visions, we never know into what unexpected enlargement we may be led and what splendid results we may achieve.

### *3. A Prayer Meeting by a River Side*

The gospel seed was now transplanted from Asia to Europe and immediately it began to grow, for it is adapted to every climate and soil.

The narrative speaks of the missionaries tarrying certain days—unimportant days that are simply huddled together under a general designation—and hurries on to a special day that shines out upon the page like a star, that never-to-be-forgotten "Sabbath" day when "we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made."

The heathen world did not know this day, but these humble missionaries knew it, and they knew how to spend it; and they spent it not in sight seeing or pleasure seeking or lazy lounging, but in attending a place of worship.

Many among us do not know what to do with this day; to them it is a day of emptiness and weariness, or a day of business or pleasure, a day that dissipates strength rather than renews it, that frets life rather than frees it.

**But to those that know its secret and use it aright, it is a divine day in the calendar that brings rest and worship and peace and breathes a better spirit through all our days.**

These men on entering this city found this place of worship. What a man finds in a city quickly reveals what he is, for every man goes to his own place.

**The young man who goes to a city and finds a saloon or a low theater is traveling a different road from that of the young man who finds a church and a prayer meeting.**

The missionaries did not at first know where the place of worship was, but they soon found it. They had a spiritual affinity and scent that led them to the right place.

**If we really want to go to to church we shall surely be able to find the place and to get there in time. But if we do not want to go, the place will be hard to find and plenty of excuses will conveniently present themselves to keep us away.**

When the missionaries sat down they found themselves in a congregation of women, which is not unlike the experience of many a modern pastor.

**Where were the men that they were not at this prayer meeting? And where are the men that they are not at our prayer meetings?**

Do they plead business? But worship is business of the first importance and they should attend to first things first. Does any one utter the sneer that the church is made up of women? If this were true (and it is not), would it be any discredit to the church? Is it any discredit to the home that it is kept by the mother?

**Women do attend church: this is an honor to the church and an honor to women; and the man that thinks to insult the church with this sneer insults his own mother.**

**It is the glory of the church that it has woman's support; and her hand is everywhere holding up its banner and bearing it on to victory.**

### *4. A Certain Woman*

The narrative now singles out "a certain woman" whose interesting story is told. Lydia has the conspicuous honor of being the first convert in Europe, and thus "the man of Macedonia" turned out to be a woman.

**The gospel in heathen lands generally finds its way first into woman's heart, and the cause that wins woman to its support will eventually conquer the world.**

Lydia was "a seller of purple," a business woman and shopkeeper who was earning her own living.

**She was a useful worker and producer, and this fact shines out as a crown on her brow. It is better to sell purple for a living than to wear it in idle luxury.**

Woman is now crowding into business along many lines, and she has a right to do whatever her nature fits and her opportunities permit her to do.

Next, Lydia "worshipped God;" she was not only a worker, but also a worshipper; she was a business woman, but she was not so busy that she

could not go to prayer meeting. Her business did not crowd out her religion, and her religion did not unfit her for business, but the two worked together and helped each other.

**This is the true relation of business and religion: not mutually antagonistic and exclusive, but harmonious and complementary; in fact, work and worship should fuse together into one life. A man's business should be his religion, and his religion should be his business.**

**This spiritualizes business and practicalizes religion and turns all life into the glory of God.**

Lydia was religious, but she was not yet a Christian; one thing was lacking, and she found this in Christ.

The beautiful steps of her conversion are linked together like loops of gold. First, she "heard" the gospel. We must first hear the truth, and if we stop our ears with worldliness we thereby shut ourselves out of the kingdom.

Next, "whose heart the Lord opened;" the Spirit has a vital part in conversion; there is a secret spring in the heart which only divine grace can touch, and for this we must pray.

Then "she attended unto the things which were spoken," she gave them earnest heed and believed and acted upon them.

Her faith now flowed into outward act and fact and "she was baptized," she did not begin to pick and choose among the commandments, but she obeyed them all.

Then "her household" was baptized; she not only received the blessing herself, but grace widened and her family was brought within its gracious sweep and power.

Lastly, her new faith flowered out into the beautiful grace of hospitality, and her conversion was complete.

**This again is the gospel in its simplicity and saving power, and of its blessing may we all receive.**

### *5. Luke the Beloved*

We have a final glimpse of Luke when he was with Paul in Rome. The aged apostle's travels were now over, his battles were fought, his strength was spent, and he was in prison awaiting the end.

**Yet his masterful spirit flames out in these late epistles showing that the old man still has fire and force in him.**

"Luke, the beloved physician," joins with him in his letter to the Christians and friends in Colossae, a city in the neighborhood of Ephesus in which missionary work may have been done by some of Paul's helpers.

Luke had served Paul well as his traveling companion and biographer and had endeared himself to the apostle. His beautiful character shines out through his books, especially his gospel which has been declared to be "the most beautiful book in the world."

**Such was the friend who was so dear to Paul in his last days and helped to cheer his weary and lonely heart. Friendship is three fourths of life, and our Christian friendships are the strongest and best.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. State the value of Luke's prefaces to his two books.
2. What heavenly visions may visit us?
3. What was the significance of Paul's passing from Asia to Europe?
4. Why did Paul and his companions go to the prayer meeting?
5. What were the steps in the conversion of Lydia?
6. What was Luke's contribution to Christianity?

# LESSON XIII.—SEPTEMBER 23

## TIMOTHY, A GOOD MINISTER OF CHRIST JESUS

### The Christian Ministry as a Life Work

*Golden Text: Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* I Tim. 4:12.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 119:9–16.

**Reference Material:** I Tim. 1.

***Lesson Passages: Acts 16:1–3; Phil. 2:19–22; II Tim. 1:1–6; 3:14–15***

***Lesson Text: Acts 16:1–3; Phil. 2:19–22; II Timothy 1:1–6; 3:14–15***

Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek:

2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.

2 To Timothy, *my* dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our LORD.

3 I thank God, whom I serve from *my* forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;

5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them;*

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

## LESSON PLAN

*Introduction.*
1. *Some Biographic Items.*
2. *A Strong Friendship.*
3. *Pious Ancestry.*
4. *Stirring up the Gift.*
5. *Abiding in the Things Learned.*
6. *The Call to the Ministry Today.*

In this lesson we are given a glimpse into Paul's private life and personal friendships. Timothy was one of Paul's converts at Lystra and thereafter was intimately associated with him in his travels and labors. A strong attachment grew up between the apostle and his young friend that with Paul deepened into a passion.

**This second letter was written by Paul when he was in prison in Rome to Timothy, then probably in charge of the church in Ephesus. Paul was now an old man, " ready to be offered," and this letter is the last writing we have from his hand.**

### *1. Some Biographic Items*

Some biographic items about Timothy and Paul's relation to him are given us in the first two selections in our lesson. We learn that Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father, hence his Greek name. He had mingled in his veins the blood of two great races with differing gifts.

**He bore a good reputation in Lystra and the neighboring town of Iconium and Paul discerned in him the promise of an efficient helper and good minister of Jesus Christ.**

As Paul was going to labor among Jews as well as Gentiles he circumcised Timothy so as to avoid giving offence to the Jews. This was a surprising thing for Paul to do, as the council held in Jerusalem in which Paul took part (chapter 15) had renounced this Mosaic rite, but he thought it expedient to recognize it in this case, and he had this liberty and may have been justified.

**A rigid hard insistence on such points easily works trouble, and Paul had a genius for adapting himself to varying conditions without sacrificing principles.**

While in prison in Rome Paul sent a letter to the church in Philippi, the first city in which he preached in Europe, and in this letter he tells the Philippians that he hopes soon to send Timothy, who was then with him in Rome, unto them, and in this connection he pays a warm tribute to Timothy as one likeminded with himself who would care for them with the same affectionate devotion.

**Thus Paul in his hard situation in a Roman jail, not knowing how soon it would end in execution, is concerned about his friends in Philippi and is dependent on his friend Timothy.**

### *2. A Strong Friendship*

In our third Scripture selection we have an extract from Paul's second letter to Timothy himself, probably the last letter we have from him. Paul describes himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God."

We might think that a man having so great an office with divine inspiration to sustain him would be sufficient unto himself and would stand aloof from human dependence. But it is this man who writes "to Timothy, my dearly beloved son."

**Divine dependence did not cut him off from human relations, and love for God does not annul but intensifies love for one another. The most beautiful human friendships grow out of the soil of divine love and hope.**

Great men, so far from being self-sufficient, are dependent on others at every point. The strongest man needs the weakest and the old man needs the little child.

**Old age should ever keep close to the heart of youth, that it may itself keep young in spirit.**

We have no certain intimation as to whether Paul was married, though it is difficult to think that he was, but if he had no child of his own he cer-

tainly found one in this young Greek. No father ever loved his boy more dearly than Paul loved Timothy.

He thanks God that in his lonely cell he never forgets him, remembering him in his "prayers night and day," and "greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy." That reads like a passage from a love-letter, and so it is, a letter of love from an old man to a youth. This shows the human tender side of Paul.

**Perhaps we do not often enough reveal and express our mutual affection. We have grown reserved and shy in our feelings, and it is a rare thing for one man to tell another that he loves him.**

**Affection may die in the chill and reserve of silence when expression would keep it warm. We should thank God for every one who is beloved of us and remember him in our prayers.**

### *3. Pious Ancestry*

As Paul writes the tide of memory comes over him and floods the page. He remembers Timothy's unfeigned faith. Faith was a plentiful article among the Jews, but a good deal of it was not genuine, being unfruitful in works, or hollow with hypocrisy, or even full of dead men's bones.

Paul could not tolerate such faith, any more than could James. But Timothy's faith was unfeigned, without hypocrisy, the genuine thing. Paul had tried Timothy's faith and had found it true and trusty.

Timothy's faith, however, had deep ancestral roots and was rightly expected to stand unshaken; it dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and then in his mother Eunice.

**It is generally the mother that makes the son: Timothy's father is not mentioned.**

Paul knew these godly women, and, when he remembered their faithfulness, he was not surprised at Timothy's faith. Two generations of pious parents stood back of Timothy and poured their spirit into his life. When asked when a child's training should begin Oliver Wendell Holmes answered, "With the grandmother;" and this is where Timothy's training began.

**Heredity is a deep and potent factor in shaping our lives. Our history dates its first chapter far back among our ancestors. Biography begins before birth.**

We come into life having upon us the touch of countless progenitors, each one imparting to us some atom or impulse of good or ill. We are often little surprised at a man when we see his mother or his grandmother. When God is about to make a great man he first makes a great woman to be his mother. Blood tells.

**Christian heredity and training are a splendid capital with which to start in life, and for such birth and breeding we should be profoundly thankful.**

Yet if we have not been favored in our birth our case is not hopeless, for human will and divine grace are sovereign even over heredity, and we may shape and build our native constitution, however poor its materials, into a temple of God.

**It is better to be the beginning of a good family than the end of one, more honorable to be the cradle of a new dynasty of nobility than the grave of an old one.**

Paul was persuaded that the faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother dwelt "in thee also." Pious ancestry in itself will not make us pious. Saintly fathers and mothers sometimes have scandalous sons. Even a pious grandmother will not save us, and the honor that has been the prestige and pride of a family for generations may in us be turned to shame. Too many people are living on the capital of their ancestors, and their names are mere shadows and echoes of names that were great and noble.

**The faith that once dwelt in our fathers must dwell in us also, or it will do us no good. We must live up to the level of our birth, or it will only drop us into deeper condemnation. We must keep our feet in the same path in which our blessed fathers and mothers walked, or we shall not reach their heaven.**

### *4. Stirring up the Gift*

Paul now begins his advice, and his first point is to put Timothy in remembrance to stir up the gift of God which is in him. Remembrance is a means of grace that we all need to practice. Good is all the while dropping out

of our lives and being lost in oblivion: remembrance would save it and make us rich.

Timothy was to remember to stir up his gift, kindle it into a flame, set the embers ablaze, as the beautiful Greek word means. It would not kindle itself; it might be in him, and yet lie there smoldering and dying: he had to stir the embers up and blow them into a blaze.

**Many a man has in him sparks of grace and goodness and genius which he lets slumber dormant in the dark; if he would only stir them up they would kindle into brilliancy and power. We all have in us undeveloped and unsuspected gifts which are waiting for the stirring of our wills as seeds wait for sun and shower.**

**No one attains his full development and power until he is set on fire of the Holy Spirit and is a burning and shining light. All great and good men have become burning souls: God gave them fire and they blew it into a blaze.**

### *5. Abiding in the Things Learned*

Paul next admonishes Timothy to continue in the things which he has learned. It was not enough that Timothy should get these things: he must keep them. Many men make a good beginning in life that make a miserable ending; they start promisingly but soon stop or go wrong.

We must not only stir up the gift that is in us, but keep stirring it up. The hottest fire will soon burn out, if it is not fed with fuel and frequently stirred.

**There are many burnt-out Christians; they were once ablaze but they did not abide in Christ; they got away from the fire, and then the fire in them cooled down and perhaps they grew icy cold and froze over.**

Paul indicates some reasons why Timothy should abide in these things. First, he had been assured of them. They were not speculations and guesses at truth, but realities which he had tested and found solid and sure.

Next, he knew of whom he had learned them. They were not cunningly devised fables that had been invented by unknown myth-makers, nor traditional stories handed down to him on hearsay evidence, but he had learned them of Paul and other apostles who told him of what they had

heard and seen and handled of the Word of Life. Timothy was close to the facts and knew whereof he believed.

And, again, Paul reminds Timothy that from a child he had known the Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. These Scriptures were the Old Testament, but they were sufficient for salvation and testified of Christ.

Timothy had been brought up on the Bible and had found it good and now he was exhorted to stand by it and stick to it. The Bible is the bread that has put iron into our blood and made us strong, and we shall be guilty of very great folly if we ever let it slip out of our hands and hearts.

**Abide by the Book, bind its precepts continually upon thine heart, and thus shall we ever abide in Christ.**

The Bible is inspired, not that we may search it with a theological microscope for its inspiration and then quarrel about whether we have found it or not, but that we may search it with humble minds and hearts for its teaching and correction and then obey it.

**The Bible is an intensely practical book, always aiming at righteousness. And it is the marvelous profitableness of the book that proves its inspiration. It has stood as a tree rooted down among the centuries and its leaves have been for the healing of the nations. The Spirit of God has breathed out of it, and therefore the Spirit of God breathed into it.**

**But its inspiration will do us no good unless it instructs us in righteousness and furnishes us completely unto every good work.**

### *6. The Call to the Ministry Today*

The same ministry in which Paul and Timothy served their day so magnificently still calls today to our ablest and choicest young men of vision and adventurous heroic spirit. No other calling can so appeal to them as supremely worth while in this great time.

**No young man is choosing a small or discredited or declining cause in entering the Christian ministry today. The pulpit has great days behind it, but its greatest days are yet to come.**

It is right now the most strategic point and platform for a man to occupy and make himself count for most in the world.

**There is a special call for strong young men in the ministry at this time.**

Young men should be glad they are alive in this great hour, when the plastic world is rounding into form and rolling through the shadows of the night into the better day.

**Never has it been so pliant since the Reformation, and possibly it can be rebuilt and reshaped by the men of this generation as no other generation could have remolded it since the first Christian century; and no other man has such an opportunity to put and leave the impress of his hand upon it as the Christian minister.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give the leading facts known in the biography of Timothy.
2. Why is friendship such a large and vital element in our life?
3. What is the value of good ancestry?
4. How much depends on our inherited nature and how much on our own nurture in our lives?
5. Why do we hold that the Bible is inspired?
6. What are the appeals and opportunities of the Christian ministry today?

# LESSON XIV.—SEPTEMBER 30

## REVIEW: GREAT MEN AND WOMEN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

### Life-Lessons from This Quarter

*Golden Text: Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.* Hebrews 12:1.

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 11:13–16, 39:40.

LESSON PLAN

*Introduction.*
1. *John the Forerunner.*
2. *Mary the Mother.*
3. *Three Disciples.*
4. *Some Prominent Women.*
5. *Stephen the Martyr.*
6. *Paul the Apostle.*
7. *Four Associates of Paul.*

The lessons of the Third Quarter extend from John the Baptist to the close of Paul's ministry, picking up the chief characters in this formative period of Christianity.

### *1. John the Forerunner*

John the Baptist is the first to step upon this stage on which was enacted the greatest drama ever played on this earth. He appeared suddenly, but had been made ready by a long season of secluded preparation in the rough life of the wilderness.

He was a fiery preacher and powerful revivalist who started meetings down by the Jordan valley that soon attracted crowds and drew them even from Galilee.

His message was repentance and he preached it in no smooth and supple words but in flaming speech that shot burning arrows of conviction into the bosoms of the people.

He was not afraid of his congregation even when big sinners from Jerusalem appeared in it.

Repentance must ever be the initial step in conversion, for until the ground is cleared of thorns the good seed of the gospel cannot grow in it.

John was a great man, even as estimated by Jesus, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven may be greater than he.

### 2. *Mary the Mother*

All motherhood is sacred to us, but a peculiar reverence must ever attach in the Christian world to the mother of our Lord. She was a true human mother as her divine Son was a true human child.

Jesus grew up under her instruction and influence, and his beautiful childhood is one of the most charming pages in the gospel story.

He grew in silence until his time was come. It came early in the life of a Jewish boy, and at the age of twelve Jesus appeared in the temple and was about his Father's business.

It is important to note that he was not teacher but scholar on that occasion. He was never precocious, but always naturally and normally human in his childhood and youth, and this should be an important point in the rearing of all children.

Jesus knew at this age what his mission in life was, and young people should early settle that, whatever their secular calling may be, their chief mission is to know and do the Father's will and work.

It is wonderful to read that Jesus was subject unto his parents, and this obedience to his earthly parents was the root of his obedience to his heavenly Father.

### *3. Three Disciples*

Jesus had to have disciples, as all men even the greatest need helpers.

**Peter comes first in this list and he was in many respects the foremost disciple. We cannot help but love him in spite of his many mistakes and blunders.**

On this occasion Jesus was questioning his disciples as to what men were saying about him, a question that is still alive and goes deep into our lives and into our very civilization. Peter gave a noble answer to the question, declaring that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

**This is the answer of the Christian centuries, and Peter as declaring this truth is the rock on which the church is built to this day. The answer brought a great blessing to Peter, as it will to us when uttered as a living faith.**

The shadow of the cross was now falling on the disciples, and when Jesus revealed it he showed that he knew from the beginning the dark end that was coming.

Peter here made one of his bad blunders by declaring that Jesus should not die, as though he could thwart the very counsel of God and stop the Son of God on the way to the cross.

**This drew upon poor Peter the severest rebuke Christ ever gave to any disciple. But he sincerely and bitterly repented and in due time was fully restored to the fellowship of his Lord.**

John was the contrasted complement of Peter, standing out in equal prominence and power, and yet being very different in type and temperament,

**He was better balanced and poised than Peter, did not so easily and so often lose his head, and yet he was not all softness and sentiment, but was a man of force and could flash fire.**

Twice he showed his fiery nature in this history, once when he wanted to stop an unattached disciple who was casting out demons and yet not follow-

ing with the regularly called disciples, and still more violently when he proposed to burn a Samaritan village that he thought had not shown them proper hospitality.

**But Jesus was of a different temper and view and counseled the better way of dealing with such cases and laid down principles of broad tolerance and charity that should enlighten and guide us in our more advanced Christian day.**

**John's better nature comes out at the cross where he stood in silent sympathy and received a very sacred charge from Jesus, which he tenderly fulfilled.**

Matthew the publican is another disciple of interest in this story, because he was a business man converted at his place of business, who had peculiar gifts in the way of keeping accounts and in writing that fitted him for the special work he was afterward given to do in his account of the life of our Lord.

**His call and conversion and the dinner party with which he seems to have celebrated his call, at which Jesus was present, are an interesting chapter in this history.**

### *4. Some Prominent Women*

No story would be fully human which did not give large place to woman, for woman is the complement of man, either of whom without the other is incomplete, and only the two together make a full-orbed human life.

**Women play a large part in the gospel story, and those that are mentioned in this list of great women are Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha the sisters of Bethany, and Lois and Eunice the mother and grandmother of Timothy.**

Mary Magdalene, who is not to be confused with the woman who was "a sinner," was one of the women who were first at the tomb of Jesus, carrying spices to anoint his body and therefore not thinking of a resurrection.

**She found the tomb empty and gave way to tears because she thought the body had been stolen away. Her tears were utterly mistaken, as at times our tears are.**

She met the Master, yet did not recognize him until he called her by name, and then the familiar voice brought recognition and joy that had to be restrained within more reverential bounds.

**She was bidden to go and tell the amazing news, and this mission is committed to every one of us.**

Martha and Mary were sisters of contrasted type and temperament in whose home Jesus found rest and hospitality. Martha was a busy fussy person, always doing something and inclined to be impatient with her more passive sister, while Mary was a meditative soul who delighted in the words of Jesus.

**They are representative of the varying types of people that make up the world and the church, and we should all learn to adjust ourselves to people of temperaments different from our own.**

Mary was present at a feast given to Jesus in the house of Simon a leper and there manifested her love to the Master by pouring upon him a fragrant ointment, which was an Oriental expression of devotion and love.

The disciples, hard-headed practical fishermen, could not appreciate such a fine sentimental act and murmured against it.

**They represent the square-headed unsentimental people who reduce everything to facts and figures and have little appreciation of the finer things of life.**

But Jesus greatly appreciated Mary's act and pronounced upon her a eulogy that is a brighter and more lasting crown than any jeweled coronet.

**She had done what she could and thereby touched the highest level of human possibility, and her beautiful deed is now everywhere around the world told as a memorial of her.**

### *5. Stephen the Martyr*

Resurrection and a triumphant church soon were succeeded by dark clouds and the lightning flashes of persecution and death.

**Dissension arose early in the church, and out of this came a new office.**

Seven deacons were chosen, and of these Stephen stood soon first. He proved to be a most forceful and eloquent preacher so that he attracted the attention and aroused the opposition of the Jews, who took measures to put him down.

Charges were brought against him, which were true in substance, but were false in the interpretation put upon them, for it is possible to tell the truth in such a way as to turn it into a lie.

These charges were that he was speaking against the holy place and the law, meaning that he was destroying these, whereas he was fulfilling them so that they were passing away only as the seed passes into the flower and fruit.

As he was before the council his judges saw a wonderful sight. Kindled by the inner light and passion of his soul Stephen's face grew transfigured and shone as though it had been the face of an angel.

In a long speech he showed from the Jews' own Scriptures that God had not confined himself to holy places in his revelations, but had gone outside into pagan regions, and that the Jews had persecuted and rejected their own prophets.

**This was too much for his judges and they hurried him out of the city and slew him with stones; and out of all the turmoil of the dreadful business the martyr's forgiving prayer was heard and is heard to this day.**

### *6. Paul the Apostle*

While Stephen was being stoned a young man named Saul stood guard over his clothes, and thus appears in complicity with this murder the man that afterwards became the most powerful preacher of the faith he had tried to destroy.

Possibly the cry and prayer of the martyr had entered into his soul and prepared the way for the remarkable conversion that befell him on his way to Damascus.

**This event turned him suddenly around and brought his soul into obedience to Jesus and transformed him into the greatest apostle of his day.**

The vision that wrought so amazing a change is narrated three times with circumstancial detail, so that it was no subjective illusion but an objective fact.

He was blinded by the strange light and led into Damascus where he tarried several days before he recovered his sight. It took time for him to realize what had happened and long meditation followed in which he was moving into clearer light.

In a leaf from one of his letters he tells us how he had suffered the loss of all things that he might win the greater gain of Christ, and he was ever afterward a forward-looking man, reaching forth unto the greater things before.

### *7. Four Associates of Paul*

Four associates of Paul appear in these lessons, Barnabas the good, Mark the young man who turned back and afterwards was restored, Luke the beloved physician and traveling companion, and Timothy the young convert and helper whom Paul learned to love so dearly.

Paul, like all great men and, indeed, all men whether great or small, needed helpers, and right well was he served by these faithful men.

Paul grew increasingly dependent on these men as he grew in years, and when in his old age his strength was spent and his heart was weary and lonely his craving for his friends was pathetic and passionate.

Friendship is so large and precious a part of life that we need all of it we can get and we should cherish what we have.

Two of these men, Mark and Luke, wrote gospels, and part of preparation for this work grew out of their association with Paul.

He was one of the greatest men of all the ages, and he has left the impress of his work and thought deeply wrought into our faith and lives.

#### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What was the special mission of John the Baptist?
2. What influence did the mother of Jesus have upon his early training?

3. Briefly characterize the three disciples, Peter, John and Matthew.
4. Briefly characterize Mary Magdalene, and the sisters Martha and Mary.
5. Give an account of the martyrdom of Stephen.
6. State some outstanding points in the greatness of Paul.
7. Give an account of the principal associates of Paul.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH QUARTER.

The Fourth Quarter closes the studies of the year with the Missionary Message of the Bible.

The meaning of this message first is that the Bible is no local and temporary book that is only one among the millions of books that have budded out as leaves on the tree of the world's literature, and then had their little day and withered and were blown about by the winds of the years and became covered with dust and then turned to dust itself; but it is a book of universal and permanent interest and value to the world and the race.

And the further meaning of this message is that Christianity is no local or national or racial cult, but is a world religion adapted to and sufficient for all times and nations and races, the one true and living religion of humanity; and other faiths, in so far as they have any partial truth and value, are only broken lights, foregleams or reflections, of this Light of the world.

**The religion of the Bible had this seed of universality in its heart from the beginning when it was planted as a germ in the soul of Abraham and from him began to sprout and spread after the manner of all germinal life.**

The missionary spirit and urge and destiny of the Hebrew religion manifested itself through all its preparatory stages when it was confined within the husk of Judaism. But with the birth of Christ it burst this husk and began to scatter its seed-corn out over the world.

**Jesus was no parochial schoolmaster, but was preëminently the Teacher of humanity and spoke to all men through all time. His disciples and apostles caught up the same message and started out with it to the ends of the earth.**

This is the magnificent message that had its rise far back in the Old Testament as a river has its springs in distant mountains; and it comes down in a widening stream through the Old into the New Testament, where it breaks over all banks and boundaries and broadens out in the world.

We live on the bosom of this stream and witness the inspiring spectacle of its growing sweep and power, and it is our mission and privilege to deepen it in our own lives and homes and communities and to open for it new channels in the world.

# FOURTH QUARTER

## The Missionary Message of the Bible

## (A Three Months' Course)

## LESSON I.—OCTOBER 7

## ABRAHAM, A BLESSING TO THE WHOLE WORLD

### Abraham, A Religious Pioneer

*Golden Text: In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.* Genesis 12:3.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 47.

**Reference Material:** Rom. 4; Gal. 3:15–19; James 2:23.

***Lesson Passages: Gen. 12:1–4; 18:17–18; 22:1–18; Heb. 11:8–10, 17–19***

***Lesson Text: Genesis 12:1–4; 18:17–18; 22:15–18***

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram *was* seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

17 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

15 ¶ And the Angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and has not withheld thy son, thine only *son*,

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. The Call to Emigrate.***

***2. A Great Promise.***

***3. The Departure.***
***4. A Confidential Interview with the Lord.***
***5. All the Earth.***

Great men are raised up to meet great needs and opportunities. They are the world's road-breakers and pioneers that open paths into a larger world for the feet of coming generations. The ancient world was overspread with the darkness and degradation of polytheistic idolatry in which the light of the true God was swallowed up and lost.

Idolatry tends to drag men down to the level of the hideous images they worship; and when they worship many gods they confuse all things with their multitudinous deities and lose all sense of the distinctness and infinite superiority and sovereignty of the one true and living God. There is only a step between polytheism and pantheism in which "all things are God but God himself."

Such was the condition of the powerful and splendid but sensual and cruel civilization that in ancient times filled the Euphrates valley. It was necessary to find some way of breaking this darkness or it would envelop the world in hopeless night.

**Abraham was the pioneer who was raised up and qualified to achieve this epochal step and deliverance. He was the Moses of this exodus, the Luther of this reformation, and the Lincoln of this liberation.**

He was endowed with a spiritual gift and sensitivity by which he caught the gleam of the one true God, and he followed this gleam out into the light which heralded the coming of the Light of the world.

**We owe much to him, for he broke the darkness of idolatrous degradation and opened a path for coming generations into the light and life of our Christian day.**

### *1. The Call to Emigrate.*

The call came to Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." Emigration is a frequent and familiar fact in our modern world where it moves great waves and masses of people from one country to another,

especially from the old and crowded countries of Europe and of the Orient into free and rich America, so attractive and opulent in opportunities. It is by no means the hard and dangerous step in our day as it was in ancient times, for now travel is easy and safe and the lines of communication are kept open between the emigrants in their new country and their friends in the old country; but even yet it is a sore trial to sever the ancestral and patriotic ties of the home land and venture across seas into a strange country.

**With Abraham the trial of such a step was immensely harder as he went out he knew not whither into dangers which must have filled him with a sense of dread at every step.**

**But progress always costs sacrifice, and spiritual progress has ever called for the bravest service and the fullest devotion of heroic leaders and prophets and apostles.**

### *2. A Great Promise.*

The emigrant going out from an old and outworn country into a newer land is lured on by splendid hopes and prizes. The cheaper land and richer soil and more abundant and attractive opportunities draw him as by a great magnet or bright star of hope, and he is urged on by this motive and promise that makes all his burdens light.

**Abraham was not going out into the unknown without a reason and sufficient attraction. A great promise was hung in his sky as a splendid star where it burned day and night as his guide and hope.**

The Lord said unto him, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing: . . and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The Hebrews had a passionate desire for posterity and this promise would appeal to Abraham.

But did not Abraham meet with sore disappointment when he ran right into the Canaanites infesting the land in which he settled? He did meet with temporary disappointment, and this has been the fate of many prophets and pioneers and is often the immediate experience of immigrants coming into our country: nevertheless the far-off vision of the prophet may be grandly fulfilled, and the immigrants of yesterday in our country may be the successful men of today. Moses only saw the promised land but was

not permitted to enter, and Lincoln was not granted a full experience of the mighty achievement wrought by his leadership.

**Abraham had this immediate disappointment, but the promise is now being grandly fulfilled. His name is one of the most famous in the world and millions look back to him as their spiritual ancestor.**

He was a forerunner of Christ, preparing the way for him, and the gleam he followed is now breaking over all lands as the Light of the world. Civilization would fall to a lower level around the globe and the world would grow darker were the name and influence of Abraham stricken from the calendar of the centuries.

**All of God's calls to go out in his service are attended with promises and in keeping of his commandments there is great reward.**

### *3. The Departure.*

"So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him." No delay or hesitation halted his obedience, but he immediately followed the call up with his conduct and transmuted duty into deeds.

**This was the greatest element in the personality of Abraham: once he saw the path of duty he put his feet right down into it, however unknown or hard or dangerous it might be, and followed it with unhesitating obedience to the end.**

**Jesus himself followed this same path, and this is always our immediate duty and safeguard and sure victory.**

**All the prophets and apostles of the race have won their crowns through such faithfulness, and this is the faith that overcometh the world.**

### *4. A Confidential Interview with the Lord*

Our lesson passes on to a time when Abraham had settled in the promised land. At the noon hour he sat at the door of his tent in drowsy repose. Brown herds of cattle were grazing on the plain or dozing in the shade and flocks of sheep covered the ridges like drifted snow. Sarah was busy in the tent.

Down over the Jordan bluffs sunk deep in the valley of the Dead Sea lay Sodom, the wickedest city of the world, whose iniquity was as black and slimy as the pitch that was mixed with its soil.

Suddenly three strangers appeared before the patriarch and instantly he was wide awake. The three strangers were discovered to be heavenly visitants and one was an incarnation or representative of Jehovah.

**These theophanies of the Old Testament twinkle in the twilight of these early times and precede the rising of the Sun of Righteousness as morning stars herald the dawn.**

Abraham and the other mysterious Person stood in consultation over the guilty city. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? "

As the promise to Abraham had extended to nations, the Lord thought that he had a right to know something of the divine purpose in destroying a city under his very eyes. Hence this confidential interview in which Jehovah revealed his designs to Abraham, and Abraham intercedes with Jehovah. God could have struck Sodom straight from this throne, but he prefers to visit it by way of Abraham's tent; he could have decided this question himself, but he will first see his friend Abraham about it.

**All this is cast in human terms, but it represents the spiritual facts of the situation.**

Thus Abraham's lofty faith and spirituality brought him so close to God that he was taken into the divine confidence and always had the latest news from heaven. Through his sensitive spiritual nature God could manifest himself and reveal his will to Abraham as he could not to the unbelieving world.

This is the truth in the Scripture, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed into him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God " (James 2:23; II Chron. 20:7; Isaiah 41:8).

**It is the high privilege of believers to know secrets of the divine Mind that are hidden from the eyes of the wise and prudent (Matt. 11:25). Humble human hearts are the dear Lord's best interpreters.**

**"The friendship of Jehovah is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant" (Ps. 25:14).**

### *5. All the Earth*

The last scene in the lesson takes us to the tragic altar on which Abraham had bound his son Isaac and had lifted the knife to take his life as a sacrifice to Jehovah, when a voice interposed at the critical moment and stayed the hand of Abraham and saved the life of his son.

**Such sacrifice was accepted and practised in that age as well-pleasing to God, and this divine voice, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad," did stop it there and put upon it the divine ban forever after.**

Then came the renewal of the great promise, "I will bless thee, . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

This promise speaks in large terms: "all the nations of the earth." The worship of Jehovah was no local cult of a tribal deity or national or racial religion; but while it started with the Hebrews and was at first circumscribed within the boundaries of their little country it also swept beyond these narrow limits and did not stay its progress and power until it had passed every horizon and encircled the globe.

Abraham lived long ago in the morning of history, but he was no narrow and stunted man, but he stood so tall that he could see far beyond his own land and people into other continents and times.

**He had ideas that were too big to be housed within a small mind, and he grasped the world in its unity.**

This great promise was renewed in clearer terms in the teachings of Jesus and found ultimate expression in his great commission, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 19–20).

**We are now living in the great time when this message is being fulfilled, and we can see it sweeping from station to station across**

all continents and seas, and the dream that was first born in Abraham's brain is now being realized, and we believe that it will reach final fulfillment.

And so the new plan of redemption was to plant a new idea in one man's mind and let it sprout and spread. Marvelous is the mysterious propagating power of life. One single seed may overrun all continents and envelop the globe.

When the English missionary John Williams returned to the Pacific islands in 1839, he carried with him a case of plants given him by the Duke of Devonshire. All the plants died on the voyage except a banana. This was carefully cultivated and propagated. From that single plant all the bananas throughout Polynesia have sprung, and it is now grown over broad tracts of the Pacific and supplies multitudes of people with a new and better food.

The gospel is the bread of life, and is spreading over the world and furnishing the peoples of the earth with a new and richer food than the bread that grows out of the ground.

Christianity thus multiplies by budding life and by the contagion of personalities and by education. It is a spiritual life which propagates itself under the influence of the Holy Spirit and has in it boundless possibilities of growth.

The world never can be washed clean by any physical or material or violent means, even though a universal flood should be let loose to submerge it, but the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon it will renew it as it did on the day of Pentecost. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

War cannot redeem the world, but only wreck it; the sword cannot save a soul, but only destroy the body.

We are not to put our trust in any of these material programs and means, but only in the gospel of Jesus Christ as energized by the Holy Spirit. The weapons of our Christian warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, and we are to put on the whole armor of God and fight the good fight of faith, which is the victory that overcometh the world.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What plan was tried to cleanse the world in the time of Noah and how did it work?
2. What new plan was started with Abram?
3. Give a brief account of Abram's emigration.
4. Does God commune with men and reveal his will to them today?
5. What has become of the promise made to Abraham?
6. By what means is the kingdom of God to be extended today?

# LESSON II.—OCTOBER 14

## ISRAEL, A MISSIONARY NATION

### Israel's Missionary Call

*Golden Text: Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.* Exodus 19:6.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 100.

**Reference Material:** Isaiah 41:8–14; 45:14–17; Romans 9:1–5.

***Lesson Passages: Ex. 19:1–6; Isa. 43:9–11; 45:20–22***

***Lesson Text: Exodus 19:1–6; Isaiah 43:9–11; 45:20–22***

In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they *into* the wilderness of Sinai.

2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come *to* the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, *It is* truth.

10 Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

11 I, *even* I, *am* the LORD; and beside me *there is* no saviour.

20 ¶ Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye *that are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god *that* cannot save.

21 Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the LORD? and *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me.

22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God and *there* is none else.

### LESSON PLAN.

***Introduction.***

***1. A Glance at the Past.***

***2. A Two-Fold Blessing.***

***3. A Unanimous Answer.***
***4. The Only True God.***
***5. A Just God and a Saviour.***

We are now given several views of Israel long after the time of Abraham to show us how the promise that his seed was to bless the earth is being fulfilled.

In the third month after their exodus from Egypt the children of Israel pitched their tents in the plain before the august and sombre mountain of Sinai, where they remained about a year.

**It was a critical year in their history and one of the pregnant years in the history of the world.**

**Here the horde of slaves that came out of Egypt were organized and compacted into a nation, and they were given the fundamental law of the Ten Commandments which still lie solid in the moral foundations of the world.**

### *1. A Glance at the Past*

Moses went up on the mountain, which was a giant altar of God, and there held communion with and received messages from him. The message he was to convey to the people was an appeal to the past as a ground of confidence for the future. "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself."

A swift glance into the past would plainly disclose the guiding presence and power of God in their history. He had picked them up as a family on the banks of the great River, the far Euphrates, and borne them as on wings to Canaan and had then carried them down into Egypt to save them in the famine and out of its bondage had brought them with a mighty deliverance through the Red Sea to Sinai and closer to himself.

**This care of them in the past was assurance that the same Providence would watch over and keep them in all their ways through the future.**

We cannot always discern the providence of God as we are passing through it. We cannot see any tincture of color as we look through a few inches or feet of pure air, but when we look through miles of it we see it tinted with

heavenly blue. So we are not able to discern much providence in the hour or day through which we are passing, but when we look back through many years we plainly see the presence and guiding hand of God.

**We should not dwell too much in the past, but we should look back upon it at times with discerning faith that we may see God and gather confidence and strength and courage for many days.**

### *2. A Two-Fold Blessing*

On the basis of this divine care in the past a great promise was now vouchsafed unto the children of Israel: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."

The promise was conditioned on obedience and keeping the covenant, for God cannot bless us unless we obey him. This is not an arbitrary arrangement that might as well be some other way, but is simply the expression of the necessary laws of life. His goodness must flow along the lines of right conduct, and unless we walk in this path its stream will not reach us.

God's special blessing to Israel would take two forms: first, they would be a peculiar treasure unto him above all people. All people are precious to God, but some are nearer to him than others because they are more receptive of his Spirit and better do his will.

**God is the Father of all men, but some are more obedient sons than others and thus are closer and more precious to him.**

The Jews had a more sensitive and receptive spiritual nature than other races and were quicker to catch his breath and know his will, and with all their faults endeavored to do his will, and so they were a peculiar treasure above all other people.

**This blessing, however, is open to all who draw near to God in humility and live in his fellowship. The Jews were not the peculiar treasure of God because of divine favoritism, for the same favor is available to all who will seek to know and do his will.**

The second special blessing promised to the children of Israel was that

they should be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. A priest was one who was specially fitted and called to stand before God as the representative of men and before men as the representative of God, a mediator between God and man.

Such an office implies high qualifications and it has ever been regarded as a supreme honor among men. It is usually confined to a few who are chosen out of the mass of men for this work.

But the great promise made to the children of Israel was that they all should be eligible to this office and honor. The priestly calling was not to be the privilege of a special caste or few favored ones, but was open to all.

So, also, on another occasion, when Moses was told that certain unofficial men were prophesying, instead of being filled with jealousy and forbidding them, he exclaimed, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" (Num. 11:29).

It is ever the danger of priests and prophets that they will come to regard themselves as a superior class who are the favorites of God with power to lord it over others in domineering authority and pride, a sacrosanct order from whom the common people must stand aloof in humility and awe.

The Bible rebukes any such spirit. While priests and prophets were specially qualified and ordained, yet the spirit of the priest and of the prophet was a gift and power open to all men, and all are still called upon to be priests and prophets and kings unto God.

**The Bible is essentially a democratic book which opens its doors of blessing to all the children of men.**

**We also are to be so receptive of the teaching and Spirit of God that we shall be filled with his truth and grace, and thereby we shall be fitted and authorized to stand and act as mediators between God and men.**

**Every true Christian is a priest unto God, and there is no place in the kingdom of God for priestly pretension and pride.**

### *3. A Unanimous Answer*

"And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (verse 8). This was a worthy answer to make to the Lord's promise, perfect at every point.

All the people answered: not a part or a majority of them, with a minority however small holding back and refusing to join in the answer, but with entire unanimity they gave their pledge of obedience to the Lord.

And then all answered together: some did not respond promptly and others hesitate and delay their answer, their voices did not fall apart into confusion, but with one voice they answered with hearty concord and unity.

**Would that we might have more of such unity in the church today where the Lord's people answer in more or less divided sections, and thus the testimony of the church is not one mighty voice and power.**

The unanimous answer of the people made a strong declaration: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Our hearing and our doing often part company, and the one lags behind the other. We hear more than we obey, we know more than we do.

And they would do "all that the Lord hath spoken." All his commandments and words were equally good and binding to them. We are disposed to pick and choose among God's commandments, selecting out such as suit us and putting great emphasis upon them and making an ostentatious display of our obedience to them, and then glossing over or paying small attention to or positively disobeying such as we do not like. This way of treating the commandments is really disobeying them, for to break one is to break all in spirit.

**These people of Israel set up a high ideal, and though they did not always attain it, yet their hearts were right. A lower ideal we should not follow and we should do better than they did, inasmuch as our light is clearer than theirs.**

### *4. The Only True God*

Many centuries have rolled along and in the next passage in our lesson we find the people of Israel in captivity in Babylon. Unfaithfulness to their ancient promise of obedience had carried them there.

They were back in the original civilization and scenes out of which Abraham their national progenitor had come, immersed in its polytheistic worship and atmosphere. There was danger that they would catch the contagion of idolatry, the germs of which still slept in their blood, and relapse into their ancient degradation.

The prophet in this passage is warning them against this temptation. Their great mission in the world was to stand against this flood of idolatry and maintain the pure worship of the one true and living God. "Ye are

my witnesses," declared the prophet speaking in the name of Jehovah, "saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall be after me. I, even I, am the Lord: and beside me there is no saviour."

This truth was and is of such vital importance to the moral and religious welfare of the world that these Hebrews were originally set apart and were now solemnly called upon to stand for it at any cost against any pressure and seduction of temptation.

**The same mission has been committed to us, and we are witnesses in the world to the one true God, and we should bear this testimony and live this truth in teaching and service, in character and in life.**

There are various ways in which we can practically deny the truth of the unity and sovereignty of God. We are not likely to relapse into gross polytheism, although some forms of philosophy that teach "pluralism" and "a finite God" come perilously near this very thing. The germs of such false and low views of God seem to be still lurking in us.

But we are more in danger of practically denying the unity and sovereignty of God by exalting something else to the chief place and throne of our life, such as wealth and pleasure, or position and influence.

**In so far as we make any worldly object the main pursuit and passion of our life we are bowing down to a false god as truly as any heathen worshiping a hideous idol of wood or stone.**

**We still need to emphasize and hold on to and live up to the second commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."**

### *5. A Just God and a Saviour*

But everything depends upon the character of the one God to whom we bear witness. Is he the high and holy One in justice and truth, goodness and mercy, or is he, like the ancient Babylonian gods or the later Greek divinities, only a being of like passions and vices with ourselves?

This ancient prophet leaves no doubt on this point, and the whole Bible is throughout clear and strong on this vital matter. "A just God and a

Saviour," is the emphatic teaching of the prophet, speaking in the name of Jehovah.

God is a God of justice in that he deals with us with equity, and no shadow of suspicion can be cast upon his integrity and truth.

But such a God might still be severe and rigid in his justice and be as sinister and ominous as irresistible fate, and so over his justice the prophet throws the softening light of mercy: he is "a just God and a Saviour," He will deal justly, but he will also mingle mercy with judgment and find a way by which he may be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth.

This gracious Saviourhood of God is manifested in its full breadth and richness and splendor in Jesus Christ the Son of God, who is the express image of his person and the brightness of his glory.

The love of God for the world is incarnated in him, and we know from him with a fullness and clearness of knowledge and experience that the Hebrews could not have that our God is "a just God and a Saviour."

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What use can we make of our past?
2. What are some of the vital blessings of obedience to God?
3. What value is there in unanimity in our religious work?
4. Why is belief in one God so important in the world?
5. Why is the character of God so vital in our religious creed and life?
6. What was the missionary call of the Hebrews in the world?

# LESSON III.—OCTOBER 21

## ISRAEL IN THE MIDST OF THE NATIONS

### The Strategic Position of Palestine

*Golden Text: Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.* Isaiah 45:22.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalms 48:9–14.

**Reference Reading:** Deut. 4:5–6; 8:7–10.

***Lesson Passages: Josh. 1:1–4; Deut. 4:5–6; 8:7–10; Isa. 2:2–4; Ezek. 5:5***

***Lesson Text: Joshua 1:1–4; Isaiah 2:2–4; 19:23–25; Ezekiel 5:5***

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, *even* to the children of Israel.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

4 And he shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

23 ¶ In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians.

24 In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, *even* a blessing in the midst of the land:

25 Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed *be* Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

5 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; This *is* Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries *that are* round about her.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. After Moses.***

***2. Over the Jordan.***

*3. As with Moses, so with Us.*
*4. The Top of the Mountains.*
*5. A Land Set in the Midst of the Nations.*

The location and land of a nation are very important factors in its development and influence. America is what it is today because of its strategic location on the planet and its great splendid continent, so rich and boundless in its resources.

**The Hebrews occupied a small country, a mere strip of seacoast, and yet its situation at the crossroads of the world gave it a commanding position and made it a vital center in the ancient world.**

Our lesson passages first show us how the Israelites got possession of Palestine and then throw some light upon the land itself.

### *1. After Moses*

"Now it came to pass after the death of Moses"—what would we expect after the death of Moses? Can anything go on after so great a loss? Will not all things come to a standstill at the edge of this break and great gap in providence? Shall there not be weeping and mourning and utter despair and paralysis? How reads the record?

"Now it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spake unto Joshua." Moses was dead, but the Lord was still alive and immediately he found another man, or had him ready, whom he could use and put in Moses' place. The greatest man may drop out of the world, and it will roll on as little affected as by the fall of a snowflake out of the sky into the sea.

**No human death can cut a gap in God's plan and providence, and he will ever fill up the ranks of his workers and keep things moving. "God buries the worker and carries on his work."**

"Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people." Instead of despair and paralysis after the death of Moses, there were to be action, progress, conquest and victory.

A new leader leaped to the front, and new aims and ideals rose as stars on the horizon to lure the people on to larger things. Weeping was to give

way to working, all the people were to arise and gird themselves for action, and a new spirit of enterprise and courage was to sweep them forward.

**When we have experienced a loss and sorrow, when a sudden break has interrupted our plan, let us not give way to discouragement and despair, but arise with our strenuous endeavor and enthusiasm and press toward greater things.**

### *2. Over the Jordan*

What was the promise made to Joshua and the people? "Go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel." This was an old promise that had been a long time on the way to fulfilment, but now its hour was come. It had been a painful path which they had traveled to it, but the promise was worth all it cost.

Yet there was one final condition that must be fulfilled: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you, as I said unto Moses."

**The land was not given them without effort on their part, but they had to go into it and go through it and possess it by conquering it.**

They could not wave their hands out over it and quote the Lord's promise and claim it, but they had to put their feet down upon every acre of it and stamp it with the seal of their footprints.

Is it not so with all the Lord's promises? They are not magical wands that we can wave and get what we want, but they are guides to action, paths over which we must travel, battle lines that lead us to victory.

**When we would possess any promised land, health, education, business success, moral and spiritual attainment, we shall surely get only so much of it as we have pressed with our feet and made our own by right of conquest and victory. The Lord's promises are not means of laziness, but incentives to action.**

### *3. As with Moses, so with Us*

What assurance did the people of Israel have that they would be able to take the land? "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all

the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee " (verse 5). As with Moses, so with thee—this was the ground of assurance the Israelites had that they would succeed.

The Lord could do nothing better than to quote himself and thus appeal to his own faithfulness. He would deal with Joshua as he had with Moses, and this was enough for Joshua to know to assure him of victory.

Moses was not a favorite of the Lord, receiving divine guidance and help that others could not obtain, and Joshua could claim and receive the same favor. The Lord did not exhaust himself with Moses, but still had unbounded stores of grace for others. Divine help was not confined to Moses and his day, but was continued unspent and undiminished down through the next generation and on down through all the ages.

We are not to think that the grace of God was bestowed upon ancient prophets and apostles with a fullness and directness and power that are denied to us. Religion did not all happen in the past.

**We still live and move and have our being in God, and he is a very present help in trouble. As God was with Moses and David and John and Paul, so will he be with us. In his name and under his guidance, filled with his spirit and might, we also can go forward to possess new lands of promise, and there shall not any man be able to stand before us all the days of our life.**

### *3. On the Top of the Mountains*

Our lesson again carries us to the prophet Isaiah and shows us one of his glowing visions of Israel's future. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."

**Here we have the magnificent breadth and universality of the prophet's outlook upon the world.**

He was no parochial teacher or narrow racial prophet with his vision confined within the borders of his own little country, a patriot to whom his country was bigger than all the rest of the world, but standing on the hill top of Jerusalem he swept the horizon and extended his vision until it included "all nations."

This was all the more remarkable when it is considered that he lived in a time when no other religion or prophet had acquired any such breadth and sweep of vision, but every other religion was then local and worshipped a tribal deity. But here we see a Jew, living in a little country and a member of a race with intense self-consciousness and the narrowest and most inveterate national prejudices, overleaping all boundaries and race and tradition and borne off on the wings of a worldwide flight of imagination and faith.

It is a small man that cannot see beyond the borders of his own country, a petty-minded patriotism, which has caused much mischief in the world, that thinks the way to love one's own country is to disparage if not to hate other countries.

**The Christian is a citizen of the world, and while he rightly loves his own country with peculiar affection, he yet has universal sympathies and recognizes the broader ties of common blood that binds all men into brotherhood.**

**The kingdom of God is the fulfilment of this ideal of the Hebrew prophet, and we are now living in the day of its widening growth as it spreads over the world and plants its outposts on every shore.**

### *4. Instruction and Obedience*

The prophet was under no illusion as to the means by which this universal worship was to be realized. He was dreaming of no quick results achieved by the sword or any material instruments; rather his prophetic vision saw all instruments of war swept away by advance of the kingdom of righteousness and peace.

**His weapons were not carnal but spiritual, and in this he anticipated the angels' song of good will and peace and the teachings of Christ.**

"He will teach us of his ways," was the first means and method of assembling many people to the house of the Lord. The prophet in his vision did not grow visionary and float off in illusive and delusive dreams, but he kept down on the solid ground of reality.

**Education was the first point in his program. Knowledge is ever the basis of conduct and of rational progress among men, and all**

**the prophets and apostles of the Bible insist on this means. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Knowledge must keep pace with grace and grace with knowledge, and only as we let the Lord through all his prophets and teachers "teach us of his ways" can we go up to the top of this mountain of the house of the Lord ourselves and help to bring the world to this same mount of enlightenment.

Next, "we will walk in his paths." Knowledge must be turned into obedience, faith into fact, light into life. In vain do we grow in knowledge and boast of all our science and philosophy if we are not moral in character and conduct. Religion divorced from good character and right is of all things in the world the most immoral and offensive.

**Useless and worse is it for us to walk the heights of science and religious imagination if we do not keep our feet down in the common ways of truth and righteousness. The beauty of our lives must commend the correctness of our creed, our faith must flow out and prove itself in our lives.**

**It is the living Gospel known and read of all men that will draw the people up to the mountain top of the Lord's house and thence carry it out to the ends of the earth.**

### *5. The Land Set in the Midst of the Nations*

All these prophets point out the central position of Jerusalem as "set in the midst of the nations." Palestine, the home of the Bible, is physically one of the smallest countries in the world, but historically and religiously it bulks larger than some continents.

It is a mere strip of country only about 145 miles long and on the average about 75 miles wide, so that it is not larger than some of our western counties. It runs north and south along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and consists of four sections: the maritime plain, the central mountain range which is its rocky backbone, the deep chasm of the Jordan valley, and the mountain plateau east of the Jordan bordering on the desert.

Packed into this small area is a greater variety of climate and vegetation ranging from the intense heat and tropic palms and pomegranates of the lower Jordan to the perpetual snow and hardy oaks and pine of the northern mountains.

**It is a crowded museum of geology and geography, meteorology and botany, and is one of the wonders of the world.**

**On account of this diversity it abounds in picturesque scenery and magnificent views.**

An important fact about Palestine was and is its geographical and strategic location on the highways between Babylon and Egypt and between Asia and Europe so that it lay at the crossroads of the ancient world. This subjected it to attack on every side and made it the battle ground between the empires of ancient history; and as the main trunk lines of travel and trade ran through it, it was exposed to foreign influences and absorbed cosmopolitan culture from every quarter.

This central location also made it a point from which it could radiate its light out in every direction upon the world.

Especially was this true in the time of our Lord and in the early days of Christianity when Palestine was in direct communication with all countries and the first Christian apostles and missionaries found roads running out like radii from the center of a circle to points all around the rim of the then known world.

**The Jews loved Palestine with passionate devotion, and in their long exile from it they have ever cherished the desire and dream of returning to it as their homeland.**

**This desire has survived to this day and is the objective of the Zionist movement, which has acquired new strength as the result of the Great War, which after many centuries has thrown Palestine back into Christian hands.**

**However this may be, Palestine must ever remain dear to the Christian as the holy land,**

those holy fields,
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
Which, nineteen hundred years ago, were nailed
For our advantage on the bitter cross.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give instances of countries that have been shaped in their history by their geographical position.

2. What happened in our country after the death of Washington and of Lincoln?

3. In what sense and ways must we set our feet down on our possessions?

4. By what means is God still with us as with Moses?

5. In what sense and degree is Jerusalem now the "top of the mountains" for the world?

6. Give a description of Palestine and show that its position was an important factor in its history.

# LESSON IV.—OCTOBER 28

## SOME MISSIONARY TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHETS

### The Missionary Message of the Prophets

*Golden Text: The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.* Isaiah 60:3.

**Devotional Reading**: Isaiah 42:1–9.

**Reference Material**: Isa. 25:6–9; 32:1–2; 49:1–6; 52:13–53: 12; Dan. 2:44.

***Lesson Passages: Isaiah 60:1–3; Jonah 4:10–11; Micah 4:1–3; Zeph. 3:9***

***Lesson Text: Isaiah 60:1–3; Jonah 4:10–11; Micah 4:1–3; Zephaniah, 3:9***

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.
2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.
3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:
11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and *also* much cattle?

But in the last days it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.
2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
3 ¶ And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

9 For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

### LESSON PLAN

*Introduction.*
***1. The Light of the World.***
***2. The Pity of the Lord.***

*3. The Mountain of the Lord.*
*4. Many Roads Running to This Mountain.*
*5. Whence Shall Go Forth the Law.*
*6. Beating Swords into Plowshares.*
*7. Zephaniah's Vision.*

Prophets were men of vision who could penetrate the future and see its light dawning upon the mountain tops before other men down on lower levels could catch its rays. In this lesson four prophets give us glimpses of their visions.

### *1. The Light of the World*

Isaiah first speaks and shows us a wonderful vision of the light of the world. The picture he draws was partially true in his day, but it came to its fulfillment with the birth of Christ, who is the true Light lighting every man coming into the world.

Jesus was born into a dark world. Politically it was bound. Despotism constricted it at the top and strangled it at the bottom where were millions of shackled slaves.

Intellectually it was decadent. Philosophy had stopped and stagnated at Athens and no fresh current of thought was irrigating the world, no new light was breaking upon the human mind.

Religiously its pagan faiths were outworn and dying or dead. Morally the world was terribly corrupt from its lowest slums up to the palaces of the rich where sensuality ran riot.

**Men were everywhere in despair and pessimism spread like a dark pall over the earth. The world then literally fullfilled Isaiah's prophecy that "the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people."**

Into this dark world Jesus was born. A star shed its radiance over his cradle—symbol and prophecy of his mission. As he grew in years he grew in luminosity until he lighted up Palestine and began to shoot rays across its borders into the great Gentile world.

**This light has now been shining nineteen hundred years and it has made a wide deep impression on the world. Open the map of**

**the globe, and its bright spaces correspond with and are caused by the shining of this Light.**

Isaiah's prophecy is now being fullfilled: "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." As from the uplifted hand of the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor there shoots a sheaf of electric light that illuminates all the bay, so from the pierced hand of Christ there issues a blaze of light that penetrates and scatters the darkness of the world.

**We live in this Light. It is our privilege and duty not only to receive it but also to reflect it and thus to irradiate a little space around us and help to send it out even to the ends of the earth.**

### *2. The Pity of the Lord*

A leaf is next taken from the Book of Jonah. He was sent to preach repentance to Nineveh, and then he was disappointed at the success of his own preaching.

**He is the only evangelist of whom we know who had too many converts and wanted to see them perish because they contradicted his provincial theology. He was willing to burn that whole city in order to confirm his narrow creed.**

A severe rebuke was administered to this prophet. He was thankful for the bit of comfort he derived from a gourd that sprang up in a night and shaded him, and he had pity on it when it withered. "And shall not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern their right hand from their left hand; and also much cattle?"

**National narrowness and racial exclusiveness and pride that were so prominent in Jonah are age-long sins of the human family and we have by no means outgrown them.**

The doctrines of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man lay the ax at the root of this evil tree, and the Christian spirit should blight it so that it will wither and die.

We are false to the very spirit of Christ and the kingdom of God if we cherish any such view or feeling towards the people of other nations and races.

God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and we should treat them as brethren and friends.

### *3. The Mountain of the Lord*

Micah is the next prophet that speaks the same message of the universality of the kingdom of God. His vision was to be fulfilled "in the last days."

The vague phrase referred to the indefinite future and gave plenty of time for the slow evolution of events. We are in a hurry and would like to cut matters short in a quick triumph, but God takes time, and the hour hand on his clock often seems hardly to move in a century.

A mushroom grows up in a night and an oak takes many years, but the one as quickly perishes and the other has some substance and staying power.

Solid results in history grow slowly and then they last. The latter days may yet be far off, but they are surely coming.

The prophet saw that "the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it."

Mount Zion, on which stood the temple in Jerusalem, was only a few hundred feet high, but prophetic vision saw it rising until it overtopped all the mountains. The prophet's insight and foresight could discern the moral and spiritual promise and potency of that humble hill and grasped its future greatness.

The temple was only a symbol of God's presence in the world, and while its material form has perished its spiritual reality overtops all other structures, home and school and business block, for it stands for the divine presence and power that made the world and is now recreating it into a new heavens and a new earth.

All wisdom and grace and power are centered in it and from it these pour out unto the ends of the world.

### *4. Many Roads Running to This Mountain*

All peoples are pictured as flowing unto this central seat of the divine presence, the kingdom of God in the world. The nations are represented as exhorting one another, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord."

This is now being partially fulfilled in the foreign missionary work of Christian nations in heathen lands. We are now engaged in a worldwide campaign for the kingdom, and this work in its opportunity and progress is immensely wider and more promising than it was in Micah's day.

The prophet assured the people that the Lord "will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." Men are finding out these paths through Scripture and experience, science and art, teachers multiply as the wisdom of the ages accumulates, and there is one Teacher whose wisdom and guidance infinitely surpass that of all others.

**The ways of the Lord are truth and righteousness, goodness and love and mercy, and these are the only roads leading to the mountain of the Lord, the only laws of life in keeping of which there is great reward.**

### *5. Whence Shall Go Forth the Law*

Zion is pictured as the seat of law and judgment for the nations. Out of it shall go forth the law, "and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

**This is being fulfilled in a remarkable way. While Jerusalem has shrunk to a relic on the map and wields no appreciable influence in the counsels of the world as a city, yet its moral and spiritual supremacy has been established.**

As Athens and Rome still dominate the world in their ancient literature and law, so Jerusalem is the religious capital of the world and from it have come the ideas and ideals that are shaping our modern life in the things of the spirit.

"And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off." Who is the arbiter among the nations today? Is it not even Jesus Christ? Have not his principles of truth and trust, righteousness and justice, divine Fatherhood and human brotherhood, so pervaded our modern think-

ing and framed our standards of national and international law that he is almost literally judging among many people and reproving strong nations?

The word translated "rebuke" means to "be umpire for," and is equivalent to the word arbitrate that is beginning to play so large a part in our international counsels and will yet dominate the future policies of all nations.

This old Hebrew prophet far back in the twilight of the world when it was yet wrapped in the smoke of war foresaw this better way of adjusting international disputes and predicted its coming as the divine means of judgment.

We are now seeing the budding of this process and the future will see its fine flower and full fruit.

### *6. Beating Swords into Plowshares*

By a striking figure of speech the prophet describes the waning of war as strong nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

The same iron and wood and other materials that make the weapons of war make the tools of industry. In so far, then, as these materials are fashioned into the engines of war they are withdrawn from the productive industries of peace, and the world is poorer by so much capital and labor.

This is one of the terrible indictments of our modern war establishments: they draw off from peaceful production so large a proportion of the treasure and energy of a nation. But when these means are released from the waste as well as from the wickedness of war they will flow back into the channels of peace and thereby multiply the goods of human welfare.

A single warship now costs upwards of forty millions of dollars, and then more than a million dollars a year to maintain it even in time of peace, and this amount of wealth turned into productive channels of industry or into education and religion would yield a vast amount of good.

The state of North Dakota a few years ago rejoiced in a battleship named after it, but the millions put into that useless and dangerous ship would have equipped the state with a complete educational system that would have ministered to its development and wealth and welfare for centuries.

**The waste of war is one of its unspeakable follies. For bread it gives a stone, for fish a serpent, and for an egg a scorpion.**

Already we are finding a wiser way of using wealth and are beginning to turn our iron and steel and all our materials, not into huge battleships to kill men, but into food and clothing and houses and schools to feed and shelter and teach them.

**Again it was an old Hebrew prophet that dreamed this dream long before the idea was born in our modern world.**

But what are the chances of its being fulfilled? Has not the world been wrecked by the greatest war of all history, and does not this shatter this dream and throw it on the scrapheap of visionary and impossible things? No, this war has been a powerful means to turn the world in revolt against war and move it to resolve that it will make war increasingly difficult and rare and practicably impossible.

**The League of Nations is an effort and step in this direction, the Washington Conference on the limitation of armaments was another, and however these may work out they are seeds and buds of peace that will yet come to the full flower and fruitage.**

**We should rejoice in and aid these movements and help to push them forward and thus roll the world out of its thousand wars of old into its thousand years of peace.**

### *7. Zephaniah's Vision*

One other prophet speaks in the name of the Lord and gives us his vision in this lesson; and he sees the same prospect of a day when the Lord will turn the people to a pure language, purged of evil speech, that they may call upon his name and serve him with one consent.

**Language is a powerful means of suggesting and sowing evil in the lives of men and nations, and a purified speech would mean clean hearts and lives.**

Now the world is all confusion, "a dust of systems and of creeds," a babel of warring interests, but in that coming day of the Lord men shall "serve him with one consent."

That will be a wonderful world in which all this warring shall cease and it shall be filled with the music of unity and harmony. That will be the angel's song of glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. In what ways is Christ now the light of the world?
2. Is any of Jonah's selfish narrowness towards other nations lurking in us?
3. How may we establish the mountain of the Lord in our country and in the world?
4. What are some of the roads that lead up to this mountain?
5. How may we help hasten the process of beating swords into plowshares?
6. Will there ever be one world language? If not in the literal sense, in what other sense may there be one human speech?

# LESSON V.—NOVEMBER 4

## WORLDWIDE PROHIBITION -WORLD'S TEMPERANCE SUNDAY

### The Fight Against Lawlessness

*Golden Text: I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.* Psalm 101:3.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 63:1–7.

**Reference Material:** I Corinthians 8:9–13.

***Lesson Passages: Psalm 101:1 8; Proverbs 23:19–35***

***Lesson Text: Psalm 101:5-8; Proverbs 23:29-35***

5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.
6 Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.
7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.
8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?
30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.
31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright.
32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.
33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.
34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.
35 They have stricken me, *shalt thou say, and* I was not sick; they have beaten me, *and* I felt *it* not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

1. ***An Iniquitous Business.***
2. ***The Drunkard's Looking-glass.***
3. ***Don't Look!***
4. ***Ingredients of the Intoxicating Cup.***
5. ***Worldwide Prohibition.***

No great moral question can be confined in its range and application in the world. The principles of human character and conduct are universal

and pay no more attention to countries and continents than do the atmosphere and the sunlight.

Once a moral victory is won in any country it is sure to raise its flag and start its propaganda in other countries and will not stop until it has encircled the globe.

**Prohibition is such a moral victory and having won its cause in our country is already lifting its standard in other lands.**

### *1. An Iniquitous Business*

The liquor traffic falls under condemnation at a thousand points in the Bible, for every passage condemning iniquity applies to this evil business in intensified force; for hardly any other organized business contains in itself so many forms and seeds of evil.

The liquor dealer "worketh deceit" as few other men do: he deceives his victims when he lures them into his den and persuades them to partake of his intoxicating stuff; and "he telleth lies" more than any other liar that is abroad in the world. He lies to his customers, for he tells them that his stuff will do them no harm; and he lies to the public, for he tells it that he has a right to his business and that he is conducting it according to the law and in accordance with decency and order.

Just now the liquor dealer is telling the lie that he was put out of business by unfair and fraudulent means; that the prohibition Amendment was passed secretly when the soldiers were over in France and that it does not express the real mind of the American people; and he is shouting the lie that "prohibition does not prohibit" and that there is more liquor made and sold and that there is more drunkenness now under prohibition than was the case before the Amendment was passed: all of these things are lies and shouting them on the street and publishing them even in high-class newspapers will not make them true or respectable.

**Therefore because the liquor business is "deceit" and "telleth lies" it "shall not dwell within our house," and that is why we have put it out of our national house, and we mean to keep it out.**

Forty-five states out of forty-eight have set their seal to this act of putting it out, and the only way to undo this action is to get thirty-six states to write an annulment of it in the federal constitution, and let them get them who can: deceit and lies will not get them.

Deceit and lies may fool part of the American people part of the time, but they will not fool all the people all the time. This Amendment cost us a hundred years of agitation and education, and now "it is written" and there it stands and shall stand.

### *2. The Drunkard's Looking-glass*

The passage from the Proverbs in our lesson is a classical picture of the drunkard and has been well called the Drunkard's Looking-glass.

We first see a general portrait of this unhappy creature.

Woe is depicted in his countenance and in his whole appearance; he is evidently distressed in his mind and plagued with diseases, pains and poverty. The short-lived gaiety of the cup has not taken away his sorrow, though the devil and the liquor dealer told him the he that it would.

What Satanic irony and mockery it is to think of drowning sorrow in drink! One might as well think of drowning a fire with streams of oil, or to put it out by throwing into it a barrel of gunpowder.

The drunkard is a contentious quarrelsome man. Drink dethrones reason and inflames passion and lets all the worst things in a man loose. Any slight provocation leads to hot words and blows and bloodshed. A man may be reasonable and gentle when sober and when under the influence of drink be irritable and violent, a terror to his family and to the neighborhood.

Of course he is a grumbler and fault-finder. Nothing suits him. Everybody is to blame for doing something against him. If he loses his employment through drink, he talks loudly against the tyranny of capitalists and the oppression of the unemployed. He lays the blame for all his faults and failures on society, on his circumstances, on his family, but never on himself.

He is disfigured with wounds. His eyes are blackened, his nose is bloody, his face is cut, and his body is bruised. But these are not honorable wounds such as men receive in war or in the defence of life; they are the causeless disgraceful wounds of the drunken bar-room brawl and street fight. His eyes are inflamed and bleary, his nose copper-colored and his face bloated.

These physical disfigurements of his face are the placard he wears proclaiming to everybody, "I am a drunkard!" Nature refuses to hide a man's dissipation and advertises it to all the world; it stares and stabs everybody in the face.

Such is the Bible picture of the drunkard, a realistic photograph that is true in every feature and line today. And beside it as the cause of it all stands the wine-bottle.

### *2. Don't Look!*

Under this picture of the drunkard is written its moral: Don't look! "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright."

If one does not look on it he will not long for it, and then he will not drink it, and if he does not drink it he will not reap its woes.

**Seeing is often the beginning of sinning.**

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took thereof and did eat. The looking sets the imagination to work and this kindles longing.

**Any temptation when looked at multiplies its associations and grows seductive and fascinating.**

When one looks upon the wine cup, it seems to grow deeper and richer in color, it displays its sparkling bead and foam, it flows in a smooth pellucid stream, it is fragrant with appetizing odors, it appeals with subtle enticement to every sense, it seems to be the concentrated essence of every pleasure, and it makes the blood leap wild with desire.

**Looking thus leads to lusting, and the only sure prevention and safety is to look not.**

This is a safeguard that every one can put up around himself. No temptation can force the intoxicating cup to one's lips. It never gets there unless his own eyes look at it and his own hands lift it.

Let young people keep their eyes and hands off this serpent and they will never feel its sting and bite. Total abstinence is total safety.

We do not then need to depend on the state or national constitution, but every one can insert a prohibitory amendment in his own constitution forbidding himself to look upon the wine when it is red.

### *4. Ingredients of the Intoxicating Cup*

In verses 32–35 of the passage from Proverbs we are given an account of the ingredients of the intoxicating cup that is true and startling, or it would be startling if we were not so familiar with it.

First, there is a snake in the bottom of it. Liquor is a literal poison that does precisely the same work as a snake bite.

It not only infuses poison into the body, but also instills a still deadlier poison into the soul. It may be very pleasant at first, but at last it biteth like a serpent.

Next, the cup is full of hallucination. While wine at first seems to brighten the senses and quicken the mind, it almost immediately begins to deceive the judgment. It blurs and confuses the distinction between subjective states and objective realities. At length the drunkard perceives objects, peoples the world with horrors, sees snakes writhing around him and crawling over him, that have no existence outside his own maddened delirious brain.

He lives in a hell that is none the less real because it is all of his own creation.

The tongue blabs out this inner confusion in maudlin silly nonsense, or in awful cries and curses of woe. Wine thus turns the wisest man into a fool or a maniac.

The cup also has in it the unsteadiness of intoxication. It paralyzes the nervous centers in the brain so that a man has imperfect or no control over himself. He is like one on the rolling deck of a vessel or on a swaying mast where all things seem to be swimming and swirling around him. He reels and staggers and falls limp and helpless on the ground.

Intoxication strikes a man at the top. It assassinates the brain, where reside all the higher powers that constitute a man.

With these lofty centers torn out, a mere reeling staggering mass of flesh, a drunken man is something lower than a beast and is about the most degraded and disgusting thing human eyes can witness.

The shameless insensibility of the cup is another of its ingredients. "They have stricken me, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not." This is the answer of the drunkard to all appeals and warnings addressed to him. He claims he is none the worse for his riotous debauches. It is no uncommon thing to hear a drunken man boasting that he "is the best man in town." This shows the blinding depraving effect of drink upon a man's self-judgment and self-respect. He does not see himself as others see him. He thinks he is "not sick" as the result of his indulgence and is as good as ever.

**This is one thing that makes it so hard to arouse a drinking man to a sense of his danger: he believes there is no danger and scoffs at it.**

At last he wallows in the mire with no sense of his own shame and degradation. He is "past feeling" (Eph. 4:19), which is a fixed and hopeless state of sin.

Finally the cup intensifies the appetite that thirsts for it and thus perpetuates its own curse. One would think that one drunken debauch would fill a man with such shame and remorse that he would never touch the fatal cup again. But presently the appetite begins to burn within him and then he begins to think, "I will seek it yet again."

**He may struggle against it, but his appetite assails him with ingenious and powerful arguments to lure him on.**

William James has a powerful passage in his *Psychology* (vol. II, p. 565) in which he describes the psychology of the drunkard's mind when he is plying himself with arguments for indulging in drink and says that the one thing such a man will not do is to face the fact that taking an intoxicating drink is just "being a drunkard." That is the conception that will not stay before the poor soul's attention.

**Calling things by their right names is a powerful means to keep one's self in the right path.**

**Such are the poisonous and fatal ingredients of the intoxicating cup; and they ought to make us fear it and turn from it and look not upon it.**

### *5. Worldwide Prohibition*

The army of temperance, having won America, though the victory is yet to be completed, are now looking out over the world and are already setting out on a worldwide march and conquest.

**Intoxication is the same evil in England and France and Italy and India and China that it is in America; and the same reasons that urged and forced us to win this victory here operate to urge us to win it there and around the world.**

The campaign is by no means the visionary scheme that some think. It looked impossible in our country at first and for a long time, but impossible things challenge our powers and by their very audacity urge us on to our utmost efforts and our greatest achievements.

Few had the faith and courage to expect a victory so soon in our own country; but it came after long slow preparation almost like an avalanche.

**What we have done, other Christian countries can do.**

Already the light is breaking in England and Scotland, and there are promising signs and conditions. India is said to be stirring in its masses with this idea. China has long struggled to suppress opium, and will succeed if Christian nations will let her put this terrible form of intoxication out her house.

**It will take a long process of education to accomplish this world victory, but we are to put our hands to this plow and not look back till we have driven it over the world.**

#### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why cannot moral questions be confined to any one country?
2. Does the liquor business justly bear its bad name? If so, why?
3. Why cannot the drunkard see himself?
4. What is the one safe and sure way of avoiding drunkenness?
5. What are some of the ingredients in the intoxicating cup?
6. What is the possibility and the prospect of worldwide prohibition?

# LESSON VI. -NOVEMBER 11

## SOME MISSIONARY TEACHINGS OF THE PSALMS

### Missionary Hymns of the Old Testament

*Golden Text:* *Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.* Psalm 67:3.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 98:1–9.

**Reference Material:** Psalms 96 99; 117; Rev. 5:8 14.

***Lesson Passages: Psalms 47:1–9; 67:1–7; 100:1–5***

***Lesson Text: Psalm 67:1–7***

God be merciful unto us, and bless us; *and* cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.
2 That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.
3 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.
4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah.
5 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.
6 *Then* shall the earth yield her increase; *and* God, *even* our own God, shall bless us.
7 God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***
***1. Mercy and Blessing.***
***2. Among All Nations.***
***3. Righteous Government.***
***4. Increase of the Earth.***
***5. All the Ends of the Earth.***

The Psalms are the hymn-book of the Old Testament church. The Hebrews were full of music and it came out in its richest expression in their religious lyrics. At every triumph they broke into song. Their deliverance through the Red sea was celebrated in a notable psalm, and victory on the battlefield gave birth to poetic thanksgiving and rejoicing.

David was not the only sweet singer of Israel; while he poured forth the richest strains, many other known and unknown singers enriched their song-book.

Singing passed over into the New Testament church and the gospel has come down through the Christian centuries on the wings of song.

**Atheism is not singable, but Christian faith, first sung by angels, instinctively weds itself to music. Revivals of religion are always floated on a great wave of song.**

The Psalms are full of the great ideas of the Hebrew faith, especially of the truth and righteousness and the goodness and mercy of God in their breadth and fullness and freeness for all the world.

**No tribal worship or national narrowness got into these songs, but they are broad and universal as the unity and sovereignty of God.**

No name or indication of date is attached to this psalm, but none is needed, for it is not local or personal in its theme and can be sung in any land and at any time.

### *1. Mercy and Blessing*

The first note struck in the psalm is mercy: "God be merciful unto us." It is a right note with which to begin, the key-note that determines all others. Angels might begin their song and sing it through without any mention of mercy, but sinful men and nations need first to get right with God, for sin lieth in the way.

Sin is a universal fact, a shadow that throws its darkness across all continents and islands so that there is not a spot where human foot treads on which it has not left its impress and stain.

**The inevitable effect of sin is to derange our relations with God, erecting a barrier of separation between him and us; not that he drives us away from him and does so in hard unsympathetic severity, but that sin in its nature sunders the fine threads of friendship and renders fellowship psychologically impossible.**

A cry for mercy, however, from his human children touches the heart of God our heavenly Father far more surely and deeply and tenderly than does such a cry touch the heart of an earthly father.

**The earthly father 's forgiveness is only a tiny drop out of the great ocean of God 's love, and once we sincerely pray for his mercy it will be granted to us in its fullness and freeness.**

Blessing is the next note in this song: "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us." Sin having been swept away through the mercy of God, there is nothing left to obstruct the beaming love of his face.

**God is essentially love in his nature so that his face is always shining, and when the separation of our sin is removed his love falls full and free upon us.**

Fellowship with God lets us into his grace and pours out upon us all the riches of his blessing, truth and trust, righteousness and peace, goodness and love. All that God is and has becomes available for our blessing when the vital artery of penitence and faith uniting us to him is freely open.

Just as the physician's knowledge and skill and medicine become available for the healing of the patient, and the learning of the teacher is bestowed upon the scholar, and all the father's wealth upon the son, so are the goodness and the goods of God showered upon his children.

**It cannot be that earthly fathers would give good gifts unto their children and our heavenly Father would withhold any good from us: only God must be the judge in his wisdom and love of what is good and best for us. It is only in this spirit of faith and trust that we can sing, " God be merciful unto us, and bless us."**

### *2. Among All Nations*

The song at once widens out to the rim of the globe and in its universal sweep takes in everybody: "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."

It is wonderful and the more we think of it the more wonderful it becomes that these ancient Jews were so cosmopolitan in their outlook, so broad and generous in their religious views and sympathies and faith.

They lived in a time when every country was provincial, shut in by its own boundaries, with an exclusive and hostile attitude towards other coun-

tries. The very gods of that world were tribal and helped to express and intensify this local and narrow consciousness.

But the Hebrews, that in so many ways were intensely narrow, yet in their religious views overleaped all boundaries and had room in their faith and prayers and songs for all the world.

In this they are still teachers for us, and it seems the cruel irony of fate that the world now has so little room and welcome for them and that they are wanderers over the earth, scarcely at home anywhere and persecuted everywhere.

**The Christian world owes them better treatment at this point.**

The way of God is needed all over the world, for the whole world is surely now crying out for saving health, and it is adapted to all classes and conditions and countries of men. It is not a local but the one really universal religion in the world.

There are many cults that men maintain here and there, but they cannot be carried outside of their own climate and habitat, for they would wither and perish. There is no use in bringing idolatry to America, and Mohammedanism or Hindusim can never take root and spread among our people.

But Christianity can go anywhere and everywhere and find congenial soil and flourish. It appeals to the universal human mind and heart, its Book everywhere wins assent to its teaching, its atonement washes away all sin, and its Gospel is everywhere the power of God unto salvation.

**Christianity is not like some local plant confined to a narrow region in some valley or lonely mountain-top, but it is like grass which grows all over the globe, around the equator and from pole to pole.**

### *3. Praise*

There is a chorus to this song that comes in at intervals: "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee." Praise is the expression of our appreciation, and this is a necessary element in right social relations with one another.

The lack of appreciation shows a cold and impassive nature that chills those around it.

Equally necessary to right relations with God is appreciation, and proper appreciation will surely express itself in praise and song. Praise is a large

element in the Psalms and in all our hymns, and rightly so as this indicates and measures our proper appreciation and gratitude towards God.

Like other essential religious doctrines and elements of worship it is the privilege and duty of all the people of God: "let all the people praise thee"; not simply a few who are gifted in song; not a paid choir or a few artists who are employed to perform this service for our entertainment; but "all the people."

A paid quartette, however good and proper it may be, may be only a way of hiring other people to do our singing as Buddhists use prayer-wheels to do their praying. Let no one say that he cannot sing, for every one can rumble along, and a volume of praise will take up and harmonize a good deal of raw noise.

**If we are in the spirit we can join in the singing, and our faith and praise will take wings and rise to greater heights of religious experience that we can otherwise attain. Perhaps never are we closer to God and more filled with his spirit than when we are borne upward on strains of song.**

### *4. Righteous Government*

A great reason is given for singing in the next strain of the psalm: "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon the earth."

Government is a foundation of human welfare. Ordinarily we do not see it or anything that suggests it, but it is a great invisible arm and hand outstretched over us day and night, and if it were removed the whole structure of our society would quickly fall into anarchy and ruin.

**God is the sole ultimate Ruler of the world, but he governs us in our civil life through the powers of government that he has ordained.**

Our rulers from the President down to the policeman on his beat before our door or the constable in our village are his representatives and agents and as such they should be respected and obeyed by us.

To disparage these officers or in any way show them disrespect, especially because they do not belong to our political party or faction or because of some dereliction of duty that may be imaginary on our part, is disloyalty

to our government and is really treason against God. Good citizenship requires of us that we honor the king or chief officer of our country and all his subordinates down to the lowest.

Yet human government at its best is imperfect and often terribly inefficient and corrupt, and we need a supreme Ruler who shall judge the people righteously and govern the nations upon earth.

This truth now stares us in the face as a world condition, for never in modern times has the world been so shattered and disorganized as it has been by the great war. Men are now trying to find some basis and form of worldwide justice and peace that will bind the nations into unity and prevent war.

It may take many experiments and efforts to reach the end, but for ages the world has longed for it, prophets have predicted it, poets have sung of it, and surely this dream of the human heart will yet come true.

**The Bible is full of this hope and in all its dispensations has promised it. Never will it be realized until men believe in God and build their brotherhood on his Fatherhood and obey his principles of truth and righteousness.**

**It shall come when " thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth." Yet we are also to labor for this day and help to bring it in.**

### *5. The Increase of the Earth*

When this day of righteous government comes, "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us."

**Is there any connection between righteous government and the reign of God and increase of harvests and of all the resources and fruits of the earth? There undoubtedly is.**

Where are harvests most plentiful, and mines most productive, and all the resources of the earth most fully developed so as to pour out the most abundant supply of goods upon the people? In Christian lands, and especially in lands that have the most stable government and the most highly Christianized people.

What is the reason that an acre of ground is so much more productive and worth so much more in America than in Asia or Africa? It is not because the soil is richer, or because of what is in or under the soil, but because of the kind of government and people on the soil.

Why are the people so poor in heathen countries? There are reasons, and they are mainly religious.

Why are famines so frequent and so appalling in some countries and not in others? There are reasons, and they are largely religious.

Christian people are more advanced in agriculture and transportation and government and in all the sciences and arts, and the reason is that they have been searching out the laws of God and obeying them. They have more stable and juster government and more enlightened knowledge and wider mastery of nature, and so they are blessed with plenty.

Let the same knowledge and righteousness spread over the world and let all the people praise God, and then the earth everywhere shall yield her increase, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is the relation of music to religion?
2. Why is mercy necessary as the condition of blessing?
3. Why can Christianity be propagated all over the world?
4. What can we do towards obtaining and maintaining good government?
5. What is the relation between true religion and material prosperity?
6. How can we be citizens of the world?

# LESSON VII.—NOVEMBER 18

## OUR LORD JESUS A MISSIONARY

### Christ's Missionary Zeal

*Golden Text: God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* John 3:16.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 40:1–10.

**Reference Material:** Matthew 28:16–20.

***Lesson Passages: Matt. 9:35–38; Mark: 1:29–39; Luke 8:1–3; 10:1; John 3:16–17***

***Lesson Text: Matt. 9:35–38; Luke 8:1–3; John 3:16–17***

35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

36 ¶ But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few;

38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve *were* with him,

2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

16 ¶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Preaching and Healing.***

***2. Compassion on the Multitude.***

***3. A Plenteous Harvest but Few Laborers.***

***4. Certain Women.***

***5. The Love of God for the World.***

The coming of Christ into the world was the great missionary adventure of God, sending his Son into this outpost of creation in order to reclaim it from its waywardness and win it back into his fellowship.

**All that Jesus did in his earthly life from his cradle to his cross and ascension was but the carrying out of this main mission. His whole biography is compressed into one marvelous shining line: "who went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).**

This lesson is a single leaf out of that biography.

### *1. Preaching and Healing*

"He went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom." Jesus went about seeking and doing good: he did not wait for opportunities to come to him, but he went after them.

**God is ever seeking us and loved us before we ever loved him even from the foundation of the world.**

Teaching and preaching, enlightening the people, proclaiming the gospel, this was the first step of Jesus in his work. The gospel is a rational system of truth that appeals to the mind: not a superstitious or despotic religion that simply works upon the fears of people.

It is based on historic facts and universal spiritual principles and can make its case good before the bar of human judgment. It pushes its propaganda along the line of education, appealing to truth and imparting it to people so that they can understand and appropriate and experience it.

**And so Christianity has been the mother of education all down through the centuries, keeping its torch of learning lit and burning when all Europe was enveloped in the Dark Ages.**

It is a great educational system today, maintaining schools and colleges and making its pulpit a means of education in the community; and one of the earliest things it does when it steps on a heathen shore is to start a school and set up a printing press.

We are called upon to teach and preach, and this is the immensely respon-

sible and vital work of the teacher in the Sunday school and the preacher in the pulpit; and when we do this word in faithful preparation and application we are following closely in the footsteps of the great Teacher, doing the same work he did and even greater, as we have a wider audience and a more enlightened world and more congenial soil in which to sow the seed.

Jesus not only went about teaching and preaching, but also healing: his ministry was not all words, but it was also works; he backed up his doctrines with deeds, he turned his fine sayings into practical service. People not only listened and were enlightened, but they also received his touch and were healed. The lame walked, lepers were cleansed, and the blind had their eyes opened. The Lord Jesus came to save the whole man, body as well as soul.

**The gospel is healing and health for the body as well as for the mind and heart to this day; and we are only appropriating a fractional gospel when we apply it to the soul and let the body go untouched by its saving power.**

The gospel heals by its cleansing and stimulating power in the body, casting out evil habits and arousing the healing health-giving powers of the soul over the body.

**Christ also heals by the skill and medicine of the physician, who has taken over in a large degree this part of the good news of the gospel and is truly a minister of God and is carrying on this part of the Saviour's work.**

### *2. Compassion on the Multitudes*

In going about among the villages and cities of that crowded little country when Jesus "saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

Since that day the world has become much more thickly populated and now presents the prospect of a vast multitude flung clear around the globe, accumulated in huge masses on some continents and here and there piled up in great clotted heaps in large cities. And they are still in a fainting condition and scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

**It is hard to look upon the multitudinous peoples of the world and especially upon the ant-hills of its cities and have some sense of the pitiful poverty and ignorance and sin and suffering and sorrow of our human kind without experiencing some sense of fainting in the heart.**

Jesus, however, looked upon this same world when it was sunk even deeper in misery and did not faint; but he was moved with compassion. He did not suffer for the world in helpless sympathy and sorrow but he suffered with the world; he identified himself with his human kind and took upon himself their burdens and in all their affliction he was afflicted.

**His sorrow was redemptive suffering that had healing virtue for the world; he was bruised for its iniquities so that with his stripes it was healed.**

There is a way of being distressed over the condition of suffering people that simply wastes itself in fruitless tears; in fact, such emotionalism may be a kind of selfish indulgence and luxury, like that of the Russian lady in the theater who shed copious tears over the fictitious suffering on the stage while cruelly indifferent to her coachman who was freezing to death while waiting for her outside.

There was no such theatrical sympathy in the life of Jesus. He wept over Jerusalem, and then he went over into the city and drove the thieves and robbers out of the temple and cleaned up the town. He turned his tears into toil, his weeping into working, his sympathy into service, and his sorrow into a great salvation.

**The world is hungry and dying for the practical compassion that does not simply stand aloof and shed sentimental tears over its condition but that goes down into it and takes up the burden of its wounds and woes and ministers healing and salvation. "As a sick child lies in the arms of its mother, so lies our sick world in the arms of God."**

**The genuine gospel of Christ is still seen, not simply in costly churches and fashionable charities, but in those who actually identify themselves with the poor and suffering and sinful, visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction and ministering healing with their own hands.**

### *3. A Plenteous Harvest But Few Laborers*

Jesus himself realized a discouraging feature of the situation, for he said to his disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

The harvest swept like billowy fields of ripening grain far beyond the horizon and clear around the world, and there he was with only twelve disciples, so few were the workers in the mighty field. Is it not so still?

Even in Christian lands the number of active workers in the cause of Christ is few compared with the work that is waiting to be done; and when we look out over the wide world and see what a boundless field it is, in many places ripe for the reapers and with many voices urgently calling for them, how pitifully few are they that are gathering it!

**Jesus, however, did not let all his compassionate feeling escape in this exclamation: he immediately set about increasing the number of the laborers.**

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." The first action of Jesus was to call for prayer unto the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers. Prayer should be the first step in every enterprise. It sends us to the source of all wisdom and power and puts us on the track of efficient means and successful attainment.

Having invoked prayer for laborers, Jesus immediately proceeded to furnish them himself as he now "called unto him his twelve disciples," and "gave them power." He did not simply pray for laborers and then let others find them, but he found them himself and answered his own prayer.

**Having offered our prayer for any gift of power or blessing we should at once proceed to answer it by using the appropriate means to fulfill it.**

Jesus gave unto his disciples authority over unclean spirits and this power was their diploma and the seal of their ordination. It takes trained laborers in the harvest field, and just anybody in any raw stage of mental and spiritual education is not fitted to teach or preach the gospel.

**The condition of the multitude is pitiful and may well excite our compassion, but only those who have been taught of Jesus**

and been endued with power from on high can rightly minister to them.

### *4. Certain Women*

We met these same women in a former lesson (Third Quarter, Lesson VI), and they appear again in this connection to show the part that women played in the work of Jesus.

Three of them are mentioned by name, but there were also "many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." Jesus called only men into the circle of his official disciples, but the office of prophetess (Acts 21:9; I Cor. 11:5) and of deaconess (Rom. 16:1, R. V., margin) soon appeared in the Christian church, and women were closely associated with Jesus in his ministry.

Many of our churches are now throwing open to women various offices and in some churches they are ordained to the ministry.

**Whether holding an office or not, women are a great and growing power in all communions, and few are the churches that could maintain their work without their active coöperation.**

In this instance these women supported Jesus in his ministry with their substance, and this is still one line of service in which women are liberal contributors. They are especially prominent in the work of missions and women's hand has carried and is carrying the gospel into all lands. In liberality and daring service and brave sacrifice the Christian women of our day are worthy successors of the women who were such loyal friends and strong supporters of our Lord Jesus and who were last at his cross and first at his tomb.

**Every pastor thanks God for the women in his church. They have some special gifts for Christian service, and they have ever faithfully used them. "The Lord giveth the word: the women that publish the tidings are a great host" (Ps. 68:11).**

### *5. The Love of God for the World*

Our lesson takes us to a point where we can listen in on the night interview of Nicodemus.

Jesus was now the only speaker. Nicodemus had become silent and sat

as a rapt listener. Jesus rose to loftier and ever loftier heights. As he sat with his solitary hearer in the silence of the night he uttered some of his sublimest sayings.

Presently he uttered that saying that is the richest and most splendid verse in all the Bible. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

This sweeps the unbroken horizon of salvation. It mirrors the whole sky of redemption, thickset with stars. It gathers up all the notes of the gospel and strikes them in one rich massive chord.

It is full of infinities and eternities. It is ineffably bright with divine love, and yet it is edged with divine wrath. Heaven is in it, and so is hell.

It opens the heart of God and shows us the infinite fullness and tenderness of his love, and as in a flashlight it reveals the lost condition and yet the infinite worth of man as a child of God.

**Here is the fountain in the Rock of Ages whence gushes that stream of grace that is bearing the gospel out over the world to its utmost bound. All the mercy in the Old Testament and all the glad tidings in the New, prophetic vision and angels' song, are in this one utterance.**

**Here Jesus said the last word that is needed to lead and persuade us to believe in the Fatherhood and love of God.**

**It was this love in the heart of God that made Jesus a missionary to this world and that should send us all out with the same wonderful message on the same worldwide mission.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What did Jesus come into this world for and why did he need to come?
2. Why is so much emphasis placed upon religious education in the church today?
3. Should we be discouraged over the fact that there is so much work to do in saving the world?
4. What special lines of work in the church are women doing today?
5. What is the greatest hope of this world?

# LESSON VIII.—NOVEMBER 25

## CHRISTIANS CALLED TO BE MISSIONARIES

### Worldwide Witnessing for Christ

*Golden Text: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.* Matthew 28:19.

**Devotional Reading:** Isaiah 52:7–12.

**Reference Material:** Matthew 5:13–16; John 15:8; Romans 10:14–15.

***Lesson Passages: John 17:18; Matthew 23:16–20; Acts, 1:6–8***

***Lesson Text: John 17:18; Matthew 28:16–20; Acts, 1:6–8***

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

16 ¶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.
17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.
18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.
19 ¶ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, LORD, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?
7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.
8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***
***1. Worship and Doubt.***
***2. A Tremendous Preface to the Program.***
***3. Divine Power and Human Coöperation.***
***4. A Worldwide Mission.***
***5. A Perpetual Presence.***
***6. Witnesses to the World.***

It was fitting that this final program of Jesus should be announced on a mountain. There was no secrecy or mystery about it that it should have

been concealed in solitude and silence. This thing was not done in a corner, but out in the open and proclaimed from a mountain top.

And the message matched the mountain, massive and mighty in magnitude and power, with its base rooted deep in the earth and its summit lifted into the blue of heaven.

**These are probably the sublimest words that ever fell from human lips.**

**They are more daring and revolutionary than any decree that ever issued from any emperor or council of state, and for nineteen centuries they have been shaping the religious and ethical history of the world.**

### *1. Worship and Doubt*

On this mountain gathered the company of the disciples to hear what the risen Master had to say. Paul tells us that "above five hundred brethren" (I Cor. 15:6) saw the risen Jesus at once, and this may have been the occasion. Galilee was the chief scene of his ministry where he won most of his converts, and many of these may have been present.

"And when they saw him, they worshipped him." They may have bowed or prostrated themselves before him after the Oriental manner, expressing their adoration.

**Worship is our sense of worthship, and these believers thereby declared their belief in the divine rank and worth of the risen Christ.**

Their faith had started with him as a man, but it now ended with him as the Son of God. They saw him in the light of the resurrection as the express image of the Father, and their hearts went out to him in faith and fellowship, love and obedience.

And the company that crowned that mountain top was the first fruits of the great and growing company of those that through all the ages shall crown Jesus Lord of all; and it was prophetic of the great multitude whom no man can number that shall finally stand before him in white.

**It is because we can worship Christ that we can also work for him.**

"But some doubted." The worship was not unanimous. Whatever the cause or the degree of this doubt, the damaging fact is boldly stated.

Imagine a petty lawyer arguing such a case before a jury, or a perfervid political orator expatiating on such a point before a partisan audience: would he admit anyone doubted such a vital fact in his case or in his party's position? No, he would declare that nobody doubted and that everybody believed: the worship was absolutely unanimous!

**"But some doubted" calmly writes Matthew in his gospel. He says this because he is not making out a case but simply telling the truth. We can trust a book that speaks in this way, and this is the method and temper of the Bible all the way through.**

**Even the immediate disciples of Jesus had their doubts, and let us not be suprised and distressed if at times and in points we have the same experience.**

### *2. A Tremendous Preface to the Program*

When a man announces his program to the world we want to know what his credentials are, by what authority he speaks. Many philosophers and socialistic dreamers have drawn up plans for reorganizing society and reforming the world, but their little schemes have come to naught because they had no sufficient wisdom or authority in constructing them and no power to put them in operation.

**"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," is the tremendous affirmation with which Jesus prefaces his program.**

He did not set out on the enterprise of world-redemption without counting the cost and seeing that he had the means, and nothing in it shall fail which all power can accomplish. Heaven is on the side of Jesus Christ and wheels all its battalions into line under his banner.

He and the Father are one, and this gives him all the power that resides in God. The power that framed the universe and forged the burning suns on the anvil of creation is at the disposal of Jesus; the constellations are marching behind and are his silent and eternal allies.

This power flows down into and envelops the earth. The whole framework of nature is plastic and obedient to his touch. All the streams of human energy, manufacture and commerce, invention and discovery, enterprise

and adventure, war and peace, flow in channels that are shaped and guided or at least limited by his hand. The human mind and heart are open to the play of his truth and love.

**The glorified Jesus is not a distant or indifferent spectator of the whirling panorama of this world, but he sets and moves its scenes, and with majestic dignity and sovereignty he solemnly declares, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."**

### *3. Divine Power and Human Coöperation*

Since all power can do all things, we might think and expect that Jesus would with his own hand bring immediate salvation to all the world. But this is not his program. "Go ye therefore," is the divine logic of his procedure.

**Divine power must have human means through which to work. The electricity of heaven's omnipotence must have an earthly wire along which to flow and flash.**

Have you ever noticed a giant steam hammer at work? What enormous power is stored up in the boiler. The hammer, weighing possibly half a ton, shoots down like lightning and strikes a tremendous blow that crushes a great mass of steel; and then again it slips down softly and delivers the lightest tap that would not hurt a child's finger. What controls and guides it?

The workman's hand on the lever. The mighty power of the steam and the puny power of the human hand work together in beautiful harmony. Either without the other could do nothing constructive, but both working together forge huge axles on which rolls the world's commerce, or mighty shafts and anchors that will drive ships through foaming seas or hold them in the fiercest storms.

So the power of omnipotence is lodged in the glorified Christ, but it waits for human hands to guide it while it strikes mighty blows or slips down in the gentlest accents of love.

**He stands back of us with his power, but we must go at his bidding.**

**From the mountain top of his ascension his disciples started**

forth on this mission, radiating from that center, and they have gone on until they have everywhere reached the rim of the world.

### *4. A Worldwide Mission*

On what mission were they sent? To overrun the world with armies and beat it into submission with the sword? To set up a world-empire of earthly power and splendor? No, but to "make disciples of all the nations."

Already the risen Christ gives commands to and makes room in his kingdom for "all the nations." Standing on that Galilean mountain top he was looking out over the whole world.

Jesus was no provincial Jew or parochial schoolmaster or local philosopher, but he was a universal Teacher and world Saviour overleaping all horizons. Christianity is no national or racial religion, it refuses to stop at any mountain range or ocean shore, but like the armosphere it overflows all boundaries and obstructions and must envelop the globe.

With this command committed to us we should not shut the gospel up in our own lives and land, but give it wings and send it over all continents and seas.

The nations are to be baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This is the germ of a baptismal formula into the name of the blessed trinity.

Baptism symbolizes saturating power, and the nations are thus to be filled with the spirit of the triune God.

The nations are also to be taught to observe all the teachings of Christ. Conversion is not the end of the Christian life, but only its beginning. This program is not a superficial process, glossing over the surface of life with a mere profession, but a regenerating power that penetrates to the core of society and renews it all in the Christian character and spirit.

The gospel is the true program and power of social reconstruction by means of individual regeneration, leavening the whole lump and mass of the world by leavening each individual particle with new life.

It is no paper program but a rock foundation deep and broad and solid enough on which to rear a new world. It is our mission to lay this foundation and build this structure.

### *5. A Perpetual Presence*

What is the connection between the divine power of Christ in heaven and the human weakness of his disciples on earth? Is he so remote and separated from them that his power is unavailable and useless to them?

Christ did not leave a missing link, a break in the connection, at this point. "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Jesus in his human presence in the world was limited locally to one place. On this account it was expedient for his disciples that he should go away into the spiritual world from which he could come in the person of the Comforter or Spirit, who, he said, "shall teach you all things."

Christ in his spirit is now present in all the world and has special access to and power in the sympathetic minds and hearts of his disciples; and thus he is with us as really as he was with his disciples in Galilee.

Sustained by his presence apostles went everywhere preaching his resurrection and sealed their testimony with their blood; martyrs stepped into the flames; and missionaries are yet declaring his gospel to all the nations. Conscious of his presence in our hearts, whom having not seen we love, we also are bound to him by ties that cannot be broken.

Such was the final program of Jesus; and it corresponds in a broad way with the course of history and fits this far-off century in a way that shows that he was indulging in no empty dream, speaking no random guesses, but was legislating for the ages in these weighty words.

This grand utterance bears the impress and signature of his divinity and proclaims him the Master and Saviour of the world.

### *6. Witnesses to the World*

A bit of conversation that took place between Jesus and his disciples just before his ascension is given to us as the closing portion of our lesson.

The disciples again pressed upon Jesus the question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" This was a question with which they had often troubled the Master, troubled him because they were not inquiring about and interested in the kingdom of heaven on earth, but in an earthly kingdom with a splendid establishment in Jerusalem with themselves in the chief offices.

But he rebuked them with the answer that it was not for them to know or meddle with such hidden things as the times and seasons which God hath kept in his own counsel.

**There are secret things which God has wisely concealed from us and it is impertinent and hurtful meddling for us to attempt to pry into them.**

But there is a plain path of revealed duty for us to follow and that is for us to receive power from on high by being receptive of and obedient to the Holy Spirit: then shall we be witnesses unto Jesus beginning in our Jerusalem or home town or city and then broadening out our witnessing through the widening circles that reach neighboring cities and sweep across our country and roll around the world.

**We now live in a day when the world is so unified that our influence literally goes everywhere and envelops the globe. Christ calls to us a great service in witnessing for him at home and unto the uttermost part of the earth. We should appreciate this privilege and live this great life.**

In simple trust like theirs who heard,
Beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow thee.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the meeting of Jesus with his disciples on a mountain in Galilee.
2. How do we know that the Lord Jesus possesses all power?

3. Give some further illustrations of how divine power and human co-operation work together.

4. How do we know that the Lord Jesus is with us now?

5. What are some of the means that now enable us to witness to the whole world?

6. How can we account for the fact that Jesus had such a world program?

# LESSON IX.—DECEMBER 2

## THE POWER OF THE EARLY CHURCH

### The Source of Missionary Power

*Golden Text. Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Acts 2:21.

**Devotional Reading:** Joel 2:28–32.

**Reference Material:** John 14:14–27.

***Lesson Passage: Acts 2:1—8:1***

***Lesson Text: Acts 2:1–4, 38–42***

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.
4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the LORD our God shall call.
40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.
41 ¶ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.
42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

### LESSON PLAN

***Introduction.***
***1. The Human Conditions.***
***2. The Divine Manifestation.***
***3. Plenitude of Power.***
***4. Repent!***
***5. A Wonderful Scene.***

The time was propitious, the day of Pentecost.

This harvest feast drew to Jerusalem an immense multitude of people

who thus furnished a compact mass and rich soil in which to sow the gospels and who, in turn, became winged seeds to waft it out over the world; and the Feast of First Fruits took on a new significance and glory as it signalized the first fruits of that harvest of redeemed souls that shall grow into a multitude that no man can number.

**Times and seasons have their place and power in the spiritual world. The days are not all alike to the Lord and some things cannot be done until the set time.**

Christ waited centuries for the fulness of time, and we must often wait for revival and blessing until the right day is fully come.

**Yet the day itself will not bring the blessing; we must get ready for it by fulfilling its human conditions.**

### *1. The Human Conditions*

On this day the disciples were all in one place. There were not many of them, but they were all there. Not one member of the church was missing to leave a gap in the little audience, and the circuit was continuous and complete, ready for the flash of power.

**Every vacant seat in the church service or Sunday school or prayer meeting is a break and leakage in the current of spiritual energy. There is power in compactness.**

Embers scattered about die out, but heaped together they burn and glow. God can kindle us more intensely with the fire of his spirit when we are all in the same place.

The disciples were not only all in one place, but they were all together, or "with one accord" implying they were all blended into unity of mind and heart.

**There were no factions, strifes and strained relations among these church members to break and scatter spiritual power. The spirit cannot travel along such a broken circuit, but must have continuous minds and hearts.**

We are studying Pentecost on its inner side; its hidden roots before it bursts forth in power. What was the secret of this marvelous outpouring that gave such power to this church? It was not numbers, for the membership was only one hundred and twenty.

This church had almost none of the things we consider necessary to efficiency. It had no scarlet-cushioned pews and stained glass windows, in fact, it had no church building at all; it had no money in its treasury and did not even have a treasurer; it had no choir or pipe organ and no settled pastor or salaried preacher. It had no elders, deacons, trustees, no missionary or other societies, no formal or informal organization whatever. There was nothing there that we would call a church, yet never was there a church of such power. What did it have?

**It had unanimity; it had one hundred and twenty souls fused into one great thought and passion; it was simply an open channel free from any human clogs through which the Spirit of God could flow in unobstructed fullness, and such a church was, and ever will be, drenched and flooded with Pentecostal power.**

**Let us get together with one accord in one place and wait in prayer and supplication and the same spirit will flow through us.**

### *2. The Divine Manifestation*

The human conditions were ready and now the divine manifestation came; the Spirit found the continuous circuit and flashed forth in power.

The coming of the Spirit was manifested in and through physical signs, for God ever uses material crutches to support spiritual infirmities. There came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind. It seemed as though the tense heavens had broken earthward and let loose a flood of power that overwhelmed the assembly.

The wind is a fitting symbol of the Spirit's work. Ordinarily the air lies around us invisible and impalpable, so soft and still it does not rustle a leaf or fret an infant's cheek, so transparent and silent it seems only so much emptiness and to have no power or use for us. But let the sun play upon it and wake its slumbering power, and it begins to blow in breezes and to gather into a storm, and at length it sweeps along in a gale or tornado that levels forest and city and tears and lashes the sea.

**So the Holy Spirit may lie around us unfelt and we may think that the great spirit of the universe is dead, but when we are in right condition he gathers his energies together and sweeps down upon us in a tide of power before which souls are tossed as leaves in a storm.**

Next, the Spirit appeared in forked tongues of flame, which was another symbol of his power. Fire, as it silently sifts down in the soft sunshine, does not seem to have much power, but it makes the whole earth bud and blossom, and as it is condensed in the lightning bolt or in the glowing furnace it has enormous explosive and motor power.

**The truths of Scripture are condensed spirit as coal and wood are condensed sunshine.**

When these truths are kindled by the Holy Spirit they begin to blaze and burn and develop their hidden energy. Thoughts of God that before we lightly cast off we cannot now escape. Our sins burn us. The Bible speaks to us in new tones and means to us what it meant to prophets and apostles of old.

**Spiritual things that were so shadowy and evanscent become intensely real and vivid and we see them solid. It is as though a new world were suddenly opened and we saw God! His love is shed abroad in our hearts and we are filled with his fullness.**

### *3. Plenitude of Power*

Corresponding with this divine manifestation were appropriate human results. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to have intense realization of spiritual realities and live under their grand inspiration and power. When the human spirit is turned into harmony with the divine Spirit, it is filled with the fullness of God and makes one music with him.

**This fullness filled them all, it was everybody's blessing; here at last is something of which there is enough for us all.**

It is surprising how few things are poured out upon us all, for material goods are always relatively scarce and are generally distributed with frightful inequality and with much apparent favoritism. But one thing all human beings must have, breath, air; and so God has poured an infinite sea of it around the world in which all flesh breathes. With equal copiousness and freeness has he provided for our spiritual life and there is enough of this holy breath to fill all souls, as there is enough air to fill all lungs.

It is the measure of spirit we have that measures our rank on the scale of life. As more and more spirit is poured into a man it saturates his flesh and streams through it, and under its purifying and spiritualizing power the flesh grows thinner and more transparent until it seems melted away and the man is all spirit. Have we not seen saints whose flesh was a translucent veil through which the spirit streamed and shone almost in a flood of glory?

**All the members of this church were filled with the Spirit, for this gift is not the special privilege of a few but may be the common possession of all souls.**

And being filled with the Spirit they began to speak, for life must express itself as a tree must blossom, and the Christian, having received, must begin to give.

**God, having spoken to us, does not mean that we should keep silent. The first revival set men talking, and the gospel must still be, not only preached, but also talked.**

They spoke with other tongues. An extraordinary occasion demanded an extraordinary gift, whatever its nature, and the need having passed away the gift passed with it.

**Yet the church still has the power of tongues. Lexicon and grammar do now what the Spirit did then. Missionaries speak every important language on the globe; and we, in sending or supporting them, speak through them in other tongues and reduplicate Pentecost in every quarter of the world.**

### *4. Repent!*

On this occasion Peter, the fisherman-preacher, delivered a sermon that went as a burning arrow into the bosoms of his hearers so that "they were

pricked in their heart" and began to cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter, without the hesitation of a moment or the waste of a word, gave an answer that exactly and fully met the question of the hour.

The substance of his answer was condensed into his very first word, Repent! This is the first recorded word in the public preaching of John the Baptist and also of Jesus himself, and it everywhere stands in the forefront of the gospel.

The meaning of the Greek word translated repent is, Change the mind. It is a broad deep word that grasps the inner character and the outer life and covers the whole man.

> "Change your mind" is thus the first word Christ speaks to us and is the initial message of the gospel. Christianity is a revolution starting in the mind and spreading down through the heart and out into the life and producing a new man.

This word rolls a tremendous weight of responsibility upon us. We are to change our minds towards sin and towards Christ, out of indifference and inaction into faith and obedience.

> This change is a voluntary act which we can effect by divine grace and it is accompanied with the gift of the Holy Spirit and the remission of sins. Peter pressed this promise upon his hearers and widened it out until it reached down through the ages even unto us.

### *5. A Wonderful Scene*

A wonderful scene now followed. Three thousand souls were converted, and the little church became a multitude in a day.

> Then the ratio of increase was twenty-five converts to one church member, but now it is about twenty-five members to one convert. If the church today were only baptized and saturated with the Spirit as was the Pentecostal church, how swiftly would the kingdom march around the world and how quickly would Christ reign.

The steps these converts took are distinctly marked. They gladly received the word. The truth persuaded them and then they changed their

minds. They did not allow the powerful prejudice they had held against Jesus to bind them, but they threw this off and believed in him.

Next, they were baptized, they received the appointed ordinance of discipleship. They did not begin to pick and choose among Christ's commandments, but gave him their full obedience.

**We cannot follow Christ in points and parts, but must go with him all the way.**

Finally, these converts continued steadfast. They did not start out enthusiastically and then slow down and at last stop, but they kept on in the apostles' teaching and fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayers.

**They began gladly and continued steadfastly, and such Christian life goes on to perfection.**

The scene closes with a picture that has given much perplexity to Christians. In the enthusiasm and joy of their new fellowship these converts abolished private property and lived together in a state of communism that some dreamers consider the ideal state of society.

But several considerations modify this fact. Whatever the nature of this communism, it was their own voluntary action and was not enjoined upon them by any inspired authority and thus has no authority over us. It may have served a good purpose for a time, but only for a time, for it soon came to an end and we hear of it no more.

Presently we find these early Christians exercising the rights of private property, and we also find them in a state of poverty so that collections had to be taken up in other churches to help the church in Jerusalem. Private property has been and is a main root of human progress, the beginning, said John Fiske, of civilization.

**Nevertheless, the spirit of these first Christians in this act was altogether admirable as an expression of their brotherhood and shines as a splendid star across all these centuries.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What was the day of Pentecost?
2. Can we fulfill these same conditions of divine manifestation?

3. In what ways may we all receive the gift of the Spirit and even speak with tongues?

4. What is repentance?

5. Why do we have so few conversions in our churches?

6. How can we imitate the spirit of the communism of these early converts?

# LESSON X.—DECEMBER 9

## THE OUTREACH OF THE EARLY CHURCH

### Expanding Missionary Vision and Activity

*Golden Text: Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* Acts 1:8.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 96:1–8.

**Reference Material:** Luke 10:1–17.

***Lesson Passage: Acts 8:1–15:35***

***Lesson Text: Acts 8:4–8, 14–17, 25***

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.
5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.
6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.
7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them:* and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.
8 And there was great joy in that city.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:
15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:
16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)
17 Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the LORD, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

#### Lesson Plan

***Introduction.***
***1. A Hard Field.***
***2. Preaching Christ in Samaria.***
***3. Results.***
***4. Peter and John Sent to Help in the Work.***
***5. Prayer for the Holy Spirit.***
***6. Preaching by the Way.***

A great persecution had broken out in Jerusalem, following the death of Stephen, and that holy mountain top flamed with fire against the new faith.

The city that had crucified the Lord now began to slaughter the Lord's disciples.

**But persecution only scattered the believers in the gospel, and presently other cities near and far were infected with the new faith and the holy contagion began to spread through the world. The deadly hatred that tried to extinguish faith in the crucified Christ only armed it with power and started it out on its world wide march of victory.**

Philip, the evangelist, went down to the city of Samaria and there started an evangelistic campaign that stirred the whole city and resulted in a multitude of conversions.

### *1. A Hard Field*

It was a hard field in which to begin. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans; there was deep hereditary racial and religious enmity between them. Philip, by the mere fact of his being a Jew, would stir up this enmity and set them against him.

Further, his message was the worst possible one he could bring. His gospel was that Jesus, a Jew, was the Christ or Messiah. Now the main bone of contention between the Jews and Samaritans was, Which had the true worship? Philip now asked the Samaritans to give up their faith and come over on Jewish ground and accept Jesus, a crucified Jew, as their Messiah. Could there have been a bolder piece of effrontery, a more deadly insult to these people?

To make matters worse, there was in the city one Simon, a sorcerer, who had given out that he was some great one, admitting the fact himself, and he had hypnotized the people so that he had them under his thumb. He stood in the way of the gospel.

Putting these facts together, we see what a nest of enmity and opposition Philip got into. What chance did the gospel have in such a place as that? No city missionary down in the slums of a great city, or home missionary out among the Mormons, or foreign missionary in a heathen land, ever had a worse situation.

**Yet nothing daunted or discouraged, Philip went to work, and presently the gospel there proved itself the power of God unto salvation. However hard our field, let us turn our discouragements into incentives and take courage and go forward.**

### *2. Preaching Christ in Samaria*

What did Philip do in this hard field? He "preached Christ unto them." He did not start a debate with the Samaritans and stir up the old points of controversy; he did not attack Simon and expose him as an impostor and fraud; he did not stop to tear down, but he began to build up. If he had held back the truth until he had convinced the Samaritans of their error he never would have got to the gospel at all. He began with Christ, and then presently Simon was swept out of the way.

**The way to persuade a man of truth is, not to try to prove that he is wrong, but to show him the right.**

Foreign missionaries do not spend their time in attacking false religions, but in presenting the true religion. The way to crowd out evil is to crowd in good. The sun in the morning does not stop to quarrel with and quench our lamps and electric lights, but it lets loose its own flood of splendor, and then presently men quietly slip around and put their little candles out.

**The most effective way by which we can proclaim Christ is to let our light shine so that others, seeing our good works, will glorify our Father in heaven.**

So Philip preached Christ that day in Samaria, and here we are, nineteen hundred years after, in the morning of the twentieth century, preaching the same Christ. Is not this a wonderful fact and marvelous witness to him? Other prophets and systems have had their little day, but Christ lasts through the ages and ever widens his kingdom and more deeply roots himself in the human heart.

**The preaching of Christ is still the business of every one of us. Philip was not an apostle or minister, but a deacon, and the record is that the church members in Jerusalem were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the word; and wherever we go we are to proclaim the same message.**

### *3. Results*

What were the results of Philip's preaching in this hard field? "The people with one accord gave heed." They listened to his preaching and

looked at his miracles; they saw he was a man with a message for them; and they considered his message and believed in Jesus as the Christ.

**Our first duty towards the gospel is to give it our heed. If we will only think upon Christ honestly, earnestly, obediently, he will weave himself into our mental associations and fasten himself upon our convictions and woo and win our hearts and then we shall believe upon him as our Master and Lord.**

If the people thus give heed, the preacher will feel the electric interest and preach with new earnestness, and the Spirit will work with power. Such attention is itself a revival and is sure of a blessing.

Unclean spirits were cast out and many palsied and lame people were healed. There are still unclean spirits and palsied people in the world, and we do not need to go far to find them. What are selfishness and envy, falseness and unfaithfulness, evil temper and passion but unclean spirits? And what are faculties and means that are neglected and unused, or perverted and wasted, but palsied powers?

**Uncleanness and palsy exist all around us, and they may be worst where they are least suspected. Our deepest troubles are evil spirits that make their nest in our hearts.**

**It is no pious fiction or imagination but literal fact that the spirit of Jesus in us casts out these evil spirits. Conversion is cure, and holiness is health.**

Next, "there was great joy in that city." How could there help but be joy with such work going on in the town? There was the joy of purity and liberty and health, for unclean spirits are hard companions and masters to live with. There was the joy of freedom from superstition and fear, for they were released from the black art and evil influence of the sorcerer Simon. There was the joy of the love of Christ, the joy of Christian fellowship, and the joy of eternal hope. The gospel brought wonderful peace to these poor, persecuted, oppressed early Christians, and under its influence their hard life blossomed into joy.

Joy is the key-note of the gospel all the way through from the first note of the angel at the birth of Jesus to the triumphant song of the redeemed in heaven. The root of the gospel is righteousness, but its final flowering out is joy. Its seed is duty, but its fruit is beauty.

Joy is what we all want, but we often make a mistake in the means by which we seek it. There are pleasures that are spiced with sin and poisoned with death. Pure joy can spring only from pure life, and pure life is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

### *4. Peter and John Sent to Help in the Work*

Word came up to Jerusalem of the great meetings down in Samaria, and the apostles sent Peter and John down to help in the work. Time was when John wanted to burn a Samaritan town (Luke 9:54), but now he went to the capital of Samaria to help in a great revival in that city; it was not the fire of a conflagration that he now wanted to see sweeping through its streets, but the beneficent fire of the Holy Spirit.

It is deeply significant that the first Christian mission went out from Jerusalem down to Samaria. These two mountain tops crowned with rival temples had flamed excommunication and defiance at each other, but now they were being melted into unity and brotherhood in their common Christian faith and spirit. Two of the deepest and bitterest differences among men, race and religion, were now closed up by this gracious work of the gospel.

The same gospel has come down through the centuries and spread over the world, dissolving the same barriers and melting men of all races and religions into one mind and heart. It is true that it has met with much refractory material in its march of brotherhood and its own disciples have not always manifested this spirit, but this is its true nature, and we should be filled with the missionary spirit that will move us to love all men and send them the gospel.

Peter and John were sent: the two ablest and foremost disciples were sent forth as missionaries, and this service still calls for our strongest men.

### *5. Prayer for the Holy Spirit*

What did Peter and John do when they arrived in Samaria? They did not assume an attitude and air of ecclesiastical authority over the converts and take charge of the meetings, but they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

It appears that the baptism of Philip was somewhat defective in that he had only baptized his converts in the name of the Lord Jesus and not also of the Holy Spirit. This defect was corrected by Peter and John by administering the full rite and then the Holy Spirit was received.

**Prayer is one good service we can always render people, and if we can pray with faith and fervency, with an intimate and strong hold on God, our prayer will avail for them and may be the very best thing we can do for them. If we always walked and worked in an atmosphere of prayer, it would save us from pride and fretting and every unholy motive and would cause to radiate from us such a spirit of purity and piety, patience and peace as would be a continual blessing to all around us.**

Peter and John did not pray that the church in Samaria might have an imposing building and an impressive ritual and a learned and eloquent pastor, but that it might have the Holy Spirit: they were keeping this first missionary church close and true to the Pentecostal church.

Nothing is said in this connection of an orthodox creed and of the apostolic succession, but the first and whole emphasis is laid on the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**If any church have not the spirit of Christ, it is none of his, whatever else it may have or whatever historic name it may bear; but, having this gift, all things else will be added unto it in their proper time and proportion.**

**The apostles laid their hands on the new converts, as an outward sign of the impartation of the gift of the Spirit; and there must be close personal contact of all Christian workers with those they would convert and bless.**

### *6. Wayside Ministries*

Having completed this mission in Samaria, Peter and John "returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans." Having done their main work in the capital city, they did not disdain to work as they passed along in the smaller towns and villages; they were not looking out for large fields and conspicuous places in cities and did not despise the day of small things; but they gleaned sheaves along the roadside and improved every opportunity in wayside ministries.

Jesus did this, while hastening to one work of mercy he would drop another along the way (Mark 5:22-43), and thus he filled in the passing opportunities of his ministry with incidental deeds of goodness. The pathway of life is bordered all along its way with these chance occasions of doing good, of performing those "little, nameless, unremembered deeds of kindness and of love," that make "the best portion of a good man's life."

**Wayside ministries that seem to us unimportant may yet drop seeds that will border our path with flowers and bless many lives. Often when on an errand of business we may speak a word that will comfort or convert and save a soul.**

**Let us gather up these fragments of time and incidental opportunities of speaking a word for Christ and we may thus sow the seeds of a larger harvest of good than we may ever know.**

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What effect should a hard field have upon our faith and faithfulness?
2. What is the value of religious controversy?
3. What is the effect of a revival of religion on a city?
4. In what ways may we help in a revival?
5. Why is the Holy Spirit the best gift God can give us?
6. What are some wayside ministries we may perform?

# LESSON XI.—DECEMBER 16

## WORLDWIDE MISSIONS

### Paul's Aim and Method

*Golden Text: I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.* Romans 1:16.

**Devotional Reading:** Romans 10:8–15.

**Reference Material:** Ephesians 3:2–9.

***Lesson Passages: Acts 16:1–22:31; Romans 15:12–21; Eph. 3:2–9***

***Lesson Text: Acts 16:9–15; 28:30–31; Romans 15:18–21***

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.
10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the LORD had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.
11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next *day* to Neapolis;
12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and* a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.
13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*.
14 ¶ And a certain woman named Lydia a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the LORD opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.
15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the LORD, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,
31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,
19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.
20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:
21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

Lesson PLAN

***Introduction.***

***1. Vision.***

***2. Advance.***

***3. A Prayer Meeting.***
***4. A Conversion.***
***5. Paul's Later Labors.***

Christian missions are worldwide because they are based on the universal Fatherhood of God and Saviourhood of Christ. They cannot be circumscribed within any limited lines of race or language or country any more than can light and electricity and gravitation. They have unlimited powers of expansion and adaptation and application so that they work everywhere in saving men and establishing the kingdom of God on earth.

**Paul was the most powerful leader in the early church in breaking the bonds of Judaism and of all local limitations and unloosing the gospel into its worldwide mission, and he himself carried it through the greater part of the then known world.**

### *1. Vision*

Our lesson opens with a vision which appeared to Paul in the night at Troas. Vision means sight, and we must see things before we can feel and appreciate them and be moved to do them.

All the great achievements of men are born in a vision. It is this form of imagination which constructs pictures, plans, ideals, and thus "bodies forth the forms of things unknown, turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name."

A mother sees in her mind an ideal of a better home, and presently her own home begins to grow into new order and show new touches of taste and beauty until her ideal is realized.

Men of genius are eminently the children of their imagination; they see visions that unveil the beauty of the world. The painter sees in the gallery of his imagination a picture of fair features and glowing colors and deep meaning, and his brush copies it on canvas. A sculptor discerns an angel in a block of marble, and his chisel sets it free until it begins to breathe. A musician hears in the chamber of his heart sweet strains and grand harmonies, and he flings them out through his voice and finger tips upon the air.

Columbus saw in a vision a new path to China, and that vision, treated with scepticism and scoffs by the dull-eyed men of his day, led him out over the unknown mysterious Atlantic until he stood victorious upon a new shore

and landed us upon this continent. How much grander was the realization than the ideal? He dreamed of poor old China and he unwittingly discovered enormously rich and splendid America!

Vision, then, is no dreamy and visionary state of mind, but its highest creative power. Vision is the first step to victory.

And this is just as true in religion as in discovery and invention and art. The prophets were men of vision seeing the morning dawn of the coming day, penetrating the far future and predicting things to come. Jesus had divine vision as he looked through the ages to the end of the world and foretold the coming of his kingdom.

Paul had this same high gift and to his spiritually sensitive soul God revealed his Son in "the heavenly vision" on the road to Damascus, and his will in this vision at Troas when he heard a voice, saying, "Come over."

### 2. *Advance*

Visions must be immediately turned into obedience or they will quickly vanish from the sky and leave no trace behind. "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision," was Paul's instant response at his conversion (Acts 26:19), and it was so again on this occasion.

Here the vision was translated into advance, and "loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis, and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia."

Straight as the flight of an arrow Paul moved from point to point to the chief city and strategic center of that part of Europe. There is something brave and magnificent in the unhesitating promptness with which Paul took this decisive and far-reaching step. He was cutting loose from all behind him and stepping from one continent to another out into its unknown fields.

And still missionaries are doing this very thing, leaving home and native country and all their possessions and dear associations behind them and setting sail across broad waters to far lands; and they do it with the same spirit of devotion and courage as that which moved Paul.

This passage from Asia to Europe is one of the most significant crossings in history, fraught with immensely greater and longer consequences than those which attended Caesar's crossing the Rubicon, or Columbus' crossing

the Atlantic. The gospel here manifested its cosmopolitan range and power as it leaped this breakwater. In one of its advances it showed that no mountain range or sea or ocean could stop its march around the globe.

And still it is marching, and every month new missionaries are sailing across seas to occupy new stations in heathen lands.

But we must not leave all this work of extending and fulfilling the worldwide mission of the gospel to others; it appeals to us to face the question whether this call to set sail does not come to us; and if we are not called upon to go in person, then we are called upon to help supply the ships and support the missionaries that this mission may not be hindered but may keep on advancing towards victory.

### *3. A Prayer Meeting*

We next find Paul, having reached the chief city of Macedonia, going out on a river bank to a prayer meeting, which, as usual with prayer meetings, was chiefly attended by women.

Are we not somewhat disappointed? Would we not have expected Paul to do something of larger and more strategic and striking importance and significance than this? Why not put up flaming posters and announce a mass meeting and start a revival that will stir and sweep the city?

This is our modern itch for the sensational and spectacular, for something big and booming; and such work at times may have its place, but it is not the deepest and most effective means.

Quiet forces are the most potent. The sunshine blows no trumpet as it slides down into the world, and gravitation makes no noise as it grips every atom of the planet. Life grows cell by cell in silence.

Paul slipped into that Macedonian city and went out to that humble prayer meeting without any announcements or noise of any kind, but he planted seeds there that grew into a church and finally spread through Europe.

Where better could he have started his propaganda in Europe than at a prayer meeting? Let no one sneer at a prayer meeting as though it were of no importance and only a place for women, for that prayer meeting may be closer to and count for more with the throne of the universe than Congress or Parliament. God is there in his sympathetic presence and power, and

that is more than can always be said of some other places that men think of the first importance.

Prayer is indeed the Christian's vital breath, the artery that connects him with God through which the life of God flows into his heart and energizes him for his life and work in the world.

A prayer meeting may be a power house that puts us in connection with the infinite dynamo of God, and then we can do all things through him who strengtheneth us.

### *4. A Conversion*

Paul's attendance on this prayer meeting resulted in the conversion of Lydia, a seller of purple, a business woman. Her business vocation was a guarantee of her ability and independence; she was no mere consumer and pleasure seeker, but a producer who contributed to the welfare of the world.

The business world is opening its doors on every side for the entrance of woman, and she is proving her right to earn her own living and take care of herself. And it yet must ever remain true that the normal and ideal place for woman is as wife and mother in a home, where, however, she is not less a producer than the husband that supports the home.

The conversion of Lydia proceeded by steps that still mark the path that leads into the Christian life. First, she went to the place of prayer and worship; she was seeking religious light and life. All good things must be sought, and religion is no exception. If we want it we must go where it is to be had.

No one can be converted who has no interest in and desire for conversion, and to this degree we must seek it if we would find it. Going to a prayer meeting or a service of worship is at least such an indication and puts one in the way of this blessing.

Next, Lydia "heard" Paul, she listened to the truth about Christ and salvation. Her mind was not off on her business or idly wandering around during the sermon, but she was attentive to the preaching.

Truth is the means of conversion.

This change of mind is not wrought by fear or any form of mere emotion, much less by superstition or magic, but is an intellectual process produced by ideas; changed ideas as to God and Christ, sin and salvation. Hence the place and need of our teaching and preaching in the work of extending the gospel; and its worldwide mission calls for schools and colleges and vast educational activities.

Next, "whose heart the Lord opened": God steps into the process at this point, a golden divine link is here inserted in the chain.

**God must cowork with the soul in conversion, for no one can convert himself so as to work a deep change in the heart.**

The Spirit of God has access to us in ways and by means that are below our consciousness, although he also works in our consciousness by means of the truth. But we must be receptive to the divine influence and let God open the door of the heart, or we may shut him out.

In the next step Lydia "attended unto the things which were spoken": she fixed her mind and concentrated her consciousness upon the truth so that it grew in depth and vividness and power.

**We all have this power of intensifying our attention and thereby kindling our consciousness into a deep glow of interest and emotion that is a mighty motive to move the will.**

Next, Lydia "was baptized," she accepted the ordinance that was and still is the appointed sign or symbol of entrance into the kingdom of God. She did not hesitate at any commandment, but entered into full obedience.

Finally, she constrained the apostles to come into her house and abide there; she practiced the grace of hospitality, she rendered the first form of service that offered itself to her; she turned her faith into fact and became a living gospel.

**And so this business woman went to prayer meeting, heard the truth, had her heart opened by the Lord, gave earnest attention to the truth she heard, was baptized and entered upon a life of service: these were the orderly steps of this beautiful conversion; and it is a path that will lead all seeking souls into the kingdom and a golden chain that will lengthen itself around the globe and bind it to the feet of God.**

### *5. Paul's Later Labors*

We are given brief views of Paul's later labors in the work of widening the gospel out over the world. Near the end of his life we find him in prison in Rome where he spent two years in confinement, though living in his own hired house where he received all who wished to visit him.

But these were not idle years: not only was he writing letters that are still leaves for the healing of the nations, but he was "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

Prison walls could not stop his preaching the word, and out through that barred door and those grated windows floated messages and shone light that have gone everywhere over the world and are now enlightening souls and leading them into the kingdom.

In the few lines from his Epistle to the Romans included in our lesson we see into his heart and see how anxious he was to speak for Christ so as to make the Gentiles obedient and how he had not wished to build on other men's foundations and thus profit by their labors, but had pushed out into unexplored and unevangelized fields to let the light of the gospel shine in the unbroken darkness. There is still much work of this kind left for us to do.

#### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What visions may we have?
2. How can we turn our visions into advance and victory?
3. How does prayer practically help us?
4. Give the successive steps in Lydia's conversion and show how we may take them.
5. What different kind of conversion immediately followed that of Lydia?
6. Where may we find unevangelized fields in which to labor?

# LESSON XII.—DECEMBER 23

## THE UNIVERSAL REIGN OF CHRIST—CHRISTMAS LESSON

### What Christ's Reign Means to the World

*Golden Text: Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.* Psalm 2:8.

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 72:1–8.

**Reference Material:** Psalm 22:22–31; Isa. 2:2–4; 32:1–4; Dan. 2:44; Rev. 11:15.

***Lesson Passages: Isaiah 9:6–7; 11:1–10; Psalm 2:1–12***

***Lesson Text: Isaiah 11:1–10; Psalm 2:8***

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

10 ¶ And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

### LESSON PLAN

***1. A New Branch.***

***2. The Spirit upon Him.***

***3. A Righteous Judge.***
***4. A Changed Natural World.***
***5. A Worldwide Saviour.***

The prophets were poets who saw truth in picturesque forms and glowing with all the colors of the imagination. The Holy Spirit employed all types and temperaments of men and writers in conveying spiritual truth to the world, and this has given us the many-sided, rich and splendid literature of the Bible and made it incomparably the greatest book in the world.

**In this passage we have a glowing picture of the Messiah portrayed by Isaiah who was a poet and literary artist of the first rank.**

### *1. A New Branch*

The Messiah is pictured as coming forth as "a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesse or the house of David was in a low condition at this time, Jerusalem was tottering to its fall, religion and morals were corrupt in that holy city, and the whole national and religious outlook was dark.

Jesse was a tree that once had been stately and glorious, the strength and pride of the nation, but now this royal house was cut down to a mere stump and gave no promise of new growth and further fruit.

But when things are darkest is often the time when new light is about to break, or new life is about to sprout and shoot forth in luxuriant growth. It was so with Judah and the promise of a Messiah.

Captivity was descending upon the Jewish people as their bitter doom, but out of it grew blessings of which they never dreamed. This, too, was part of the preparation by which they were disciplined to give forth to the world a new Branch that would grow into a Tree that would overshadow the world and bear leaves that would be for the healing of the nations.

The name Branch as applied to Christ is a significant one. It means that he sprang out of the loins of humanity and was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He did not come as an angel or a divine being having no racial connection and identity with us, for then he would have been separate and apart from us and could not have been "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" and have been "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

The true humanity of Jesus is as essential to his worldwide Saviourhood as his divinity, and he is the new Branch of our mystic tree of human life who is even now giving new life and rich fruitage to the world.

### *2. The Spirit upon Him*

The kind of life that is in a branch, the sap or spirit that is flowing through it and breaking out of it in every leaf and bud and fruit, this is the important thing about it. Some branches are vigorous and beautiful, but they have in them poisonous sap that impregnates their leaves and fruit with death and may even cause them to breathe forth a deadly odor that blights living things around them.

But this Branch is endowed with one Spirit that appears in various modes of manifestation.

There rests upon him the spirit of wisdom and understanding, or intellectual discernment and judgment. There is no getting along without this spirit in this world. We must know before we can do, and knowledge is power in every field of life.

Jesus always exercised wisdom and understanding, sound judgment, common sense in all his words and ways. Let any one read his life as portrayed in the gospels and he will be impressed with this aspect of his way of doing things.

As a single instance, when he was about to feed the five thousand with the few loaves, how did he go about it? A quick way would have been to throw the bread out among the multitude and let them seize it. But this would have turned the multitude into a mob that would have trampled the loaves into the ground. But Jesus had the multitude sit down in ranks, and then the bread was distributed to them systematically and quietly and it proceeded from row to row and from hand to hand until the last child was fed and no crumb was wasted.

What was this but a businesslike way of proceeding and an exercise of good judgment and common sense? Many such illustrations occur in his life and they abundantly fulfill this proph-

**ecy that there should "rest upon him the spirit of wisdom and understanding."**

In the same way there would rest upon him "the spirit of counsel and might," or practical ability to do things, and "the spirit of the fear of the Lord," or of religious reverence and obedience.

**All these forms of spirit rested upon Jesus Christ without measure so that he was supreme in intellectual and practical and religious endowment.**

**He therefore comes to us as a competent Saviour, not as a raw hand and experimenter at the business, but as a qualified expert who knows what he is to do and how he is to do it and has every equipment for his world task.**

### *3. A Righteous Judge*

The new Branch of humanity is next set forth as a righteous Judge. The world has sad need of such a ruler, for it has had a long and weary and woeful experience of other kinds. Often has the ruler and judge of the nation been corrupt and tyrannical and wicked, who ruled with a rod of iron and swept a sword through his people as a scythe mows down the grass.

**The world has had enough rulers who have built their empires with the sword on human bones and blood. It now waits and longs for the Prince of Peace.**

He was born at Bethlehem and angels heralded his coming and wise men worshipped at his feet. "He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears, but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." He can penetrate beneath all mere outward appearances, that so often are deceptive, into the core and center of human minds and hearts and know the truth about human character and conduct. Such a Judge is a terror to evil doers who try to conceal their deeds and their real selves in deceit and darkness, but he is the security and comfort of the poor and the meek who are honest and sincere.

"He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." There are times when men feel the

need of such a Judge to visit righteous retribution upon rulers that trample upon neighboring nations and leave their lands a desolation.

**We have seen such wicked devastation wrought in our day, and the rod of iron has fallen upon the guilty people and hot breath has slain many of them.**

"And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." The very universe is safe and respectable only when righteousness is on its throne; and we have the assurance that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a righteous and faithful Ruler and Judge.

**Such is the spirit and character of the promised Messiah and we can see that it was realized in the person of Christ, who fills out this prophetic picture in every feature and at every point.**

But is he really ruling in the world in this spirit? It is painfully true that he has not yet fully come to his throne and kingdom in the world as all its sin and ruin and sorrow sadly bear witness. Yet can we not see that his rule is broadening in the world and his spirit increasing in the hearts of men? The principles of Jesus are being discovered and proved to be the ethical and spiritual laws of life, individual and social, national and international, in keeping of which there is life more abundant and great reward. It is only on these principles that we can live together and move up the scale into life richer and finer.

**Whether recognized or not as being his truth and righteousness, these principles are pervading and uplifting our social ethics and our international relations, and Christ is more and more coming to his throne as the rightful Ruler of the world.**

### *4. A Changed Natural World*

This King's rule is pictured as being wider than our human world and as invading and transforming the animal kingdom into harmony and peace. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the fiercest and most bloodthirsty shall dwell in peace with the weakest and most innocent: the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion shall lie together, and a little child shall play with them as though they were kittens. The cow and

the bear shall "feed," or "shall become friends." The child shall also put its hand on the deadliest serpent without injury. "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

How far is this to be taken literally and how far is it a poetic picture?

**There is no telling how far it may be literally realized when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord," for such knowledge will first humanize and spiritualize men, and then they will pacify and harmonize the animal world in a degree that we may now little suspect or think possible.**

For man has invaded and poisoned with fear and ferocity the animal kingdom and turned it into universal suspicion and violent enmity against himself. When animals are found in a state of pure nature unvisited by man they are often unsuspicious of him and will come to him in trustfulness.

**It is often beautiful to see how friendly they are in their native innocence.**

But man has invaded their world with trap and gun and has slaughtered them and turned their forest or jungle into a place of terror, and so they have turned against him; or he has captured and domesticated them and enslaved them to his uses and then he has overworked and beaten and starved them and dealt with them with such frightful injustice and inhumanity that they have tried to pay him back in his own enmity.

**If man himself were just and kind and good, his relations with animals would greatly improve and in many cases might approach the state of harmony and fellowship foreseen by the prophet.**

**At any rate we ought to be just and kind in our treatment of animals and thereby make them our friends; for very few of them, even the deadliest, will molest us unless we molest them.**

But however this may be, this picture may be taken as a poetic portrayal of the state of human nature itself when it is pervaded and controlled by the knowledge of the Lord. Man has become a cage of wild beasts and all their passions snarl and snap within him; and this animal nature leads men to fight and bite and tear one another with all the ferocity of the jungle; indeed such

a spectacle as our human world presented in the great war would surely shame the jungle itself.

In so far as the spirit of Jesus fills us we shall become pure and peaceful and our human world will be transformed into an affectionate family.

### *5. A Worldwide Saviour*

Our lesson closes with prophetic views of the "Root of Jesse" as a worldwide Saviour. He "shall stand for an ensign of the people" and to him "shall the Gentiles seek."

With this also conforms the vision of the psalmist who speaking in the name of Jehovah declares, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

Such a worldwide vision back in that early age among Jews who were noted for their narrowness must ever excite our wonder and compel us to discern some divine breath inspiring them and giving them this unlimited and splendid outlook upon all the ends of the earth.

We have come into a broader and clearer day when the dawn of the Sun of Righteousness has arisen upon us and we see all things in the light of his universal teaching and presence and power.

Jesus was wholly freed from the bonds of Jewish exclusiveness and so loved the world that he tasted death for every man and founded a kingdom whose boundary is the rim of the planet and in which there is room and welcome and redemption and eternal life for all the sons of men.

#### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What relation does Jesus Christ bear to the human race?
2. In what degree may we have the spirit of Jesus?
3. How may we have righteous judges and rulers?
4. What is our duty to animals?
5. In what ways may we promote the worldwide Saviourhood of Christ?

# LESSON XIII.—DECEMBER 30

## REVIEW: THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

### The Present Missionary Outlook

*Golden Text: They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.* Psalm 145:7.

**Devotional Reading:** Titus 2:11–14.

LESSON PLAN

*Introduction.*
1. *Abraham and Israel.*
2. *The Prophets and Psalmists.*
3. *Jesus and His Disciples.*
4. *The Early Church.*
5. *Worldwide Missions.*

The last Quarter of the year gives us an optimistic outlook upon the kingdom of God in the world. It starts back in the fountain of an individual in the Old Testament and grows into a broader national stream in the Jewish people; in the New Testament this stream widens out into the sea of the world, and today Christianity has encircled the globe and reached every shore.

### *1. Abraham and Israel*

The plan of redeeming the world by washing it in the waters of a universal flood had been tried and shown to be inadequate, and another plan was now put into operation.

> This plan was to plant a seed of new life in an individual and let it grow and spread until it envelops the earth, as a single germ of leaven will leaven a whole mass of meal or as one seed of a plant will multiply itself over all continents and islands.

Abraham was the beginning of this plan. He was picked out of the idolatrous polytheists of the Euphratean valley in which he lived and called to go forth, bearing the seed of a monotheistic faith westward into a new environment.

The environment did not seem congenial when he arrived in it, for "the Canaanite was then in the land," and he found himself in the midst of an even lower grade of idolaters. Yet he was severed from his old associations and was thereby able to keep himself and his family immune from the fatal infection.

In due time his descendants were carried down into Egypt and came forth as a multitude to be organized as a nation and started on their career as the chosen people of God.

At Sinai the formal organization was effected and the people committed themselves to the worship and service of Jehovah as the one true and living God.

The centuries rolled along, the people were put in possession of the promised land, they developed into a strong nation, which reached the zenith of its power and splendor under David and Solomon and then split in two and left the northern and southern kingdoms to struggle together and decline in spirituality into idolatry until captivity swallowed them both in Babylon.

**They were in danger of falling into the depths of idolatry and ending just where they started, but the bitter experience of captivity burned these germs out of their blood and they were cured for all time of this fatal disease and enabled to preserve the true faith and transmit it to the world.**

### *2. The Prophets and Psalmists*

The prophets were the outstanding mountain peaks of the Hebrew people, indicating and determining the trend of their history. They are the teachers who have insight and foresight in perceiving and presenting religious truth, molding the views and character and conduct of the people of their day and leaving their impress upon them for generations to come. Four of these prophets are brought before us in this Quarter as illustrations of their class.

Isaiah is the one most richly endowed with the prophetic gift of a powerful and brilliant imagination that is sensitive to perceive and able to picture religious truth. He presents a wonderful vision of the light of the world which he saw kindling the horizon of the future with a rosy glow, which grew into and was fulfilled in the Light that lighteth every man coming into the world.

**At the birth of Jesus the world literally fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy that " the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness**

the people," but now when we open the map of the world its brighter spaces correspond with the Light that began to shine in Galilee nineteen hundred years ago.

Jonah next comes upon the scene to show us in his own experience the worldwide pity of the Lord. He was willing to burn a great city in order to gratify his racial narrowness and confirm his sectarian theology, but God showed him a broader and better way in sparing the city with its multitude of children, besides much cattle.

National narrowness and racial exclusiveness and pride did not pass out of the world with the Jews represented by Jonah, and they are sins still wide and deep among all nations; we have our share of these sins and should rise above them.

Micah presents the picture of the mountain of the Lord which shall rise into supremacy over all the hills of the world and draw all nations unto it. Jerusalem was a humble hill, but the prophet's foresight could discern its spiritual height and see it mounting into ethical and religious dominance.

All roads run to it, and as the nations come to it they will learn better ways of adjusting their problems and living together than war and will convert all their instruments of destruction into the means of peaceful industry, a prophecy that is now beginning to bud and give promise of its full blossom and fruit.

Zephaniah foresees a people with a pure language, and as speech expresses the whole inner life this forecasts a day when people will be pure in heart out of which are all the issues of life.

The lesson on worldwide prohibition brings before us one item in the fulfilment of these prophecies which we are now witnessing. The psalmists are at one with the prophets in their forecasts of the future and sing praises of the same blessings upon all the ends of the earth.

### *3. Jesus and His Disciples*

This stream of prophetic teaching broadens out in the fuller and clearer teaching of Jesus and his disciples. The whole biography of Jesus is a picture

of his rapid movements from point to point, always doing good and sometimes while hurrying to one work of mercy dropping another by the way.

He went about among the cities and villages preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and kingdom is a wide word covering the world. He had compassion on the multitude, and this is a rare virtue, many people not caring to come into contact much less companionship with all classes and races of people.

**But Jesus was no respector of persons and freely received and associated with all sorts and conditions of men, and if we have his spirit we shall have equally broad sympathies.**

Jesus saw the whole world as a vast harvest field ready for reapers, but these laborers were comparatively few in his day; and though they have multiplied in our day yet compared with the still greater field open and calling to us they are still painfully few.

It is interesting and suggestive to find "certain women" following and supporting Jesus in his ministry, and they are now a great host publishing his gospel.

The lesson on Jesus as a missionary logically closes with his wonderful golden words on the love of God for the world.

**The missionary teaching and work of Jesus immediately passed on to his disciples.**

**They were trained under him for this service, and they received their great commission for their worldwide work in his great utterance on the mountain top in Galilee where he met his disciples after his resurrection.**

### *4. The Early Church*

The first manifestation of the power of the gospel after it passed into the hands of the disciples was the glorious revival on the day of Pentecost, one of the greatest days in the history of Christianity.

The human conditions were first all fulfilled in the total attendance and unanimity of the church members so that they were fused into one mind and heart, and then the divine outpouring of the Spirit came in a flood of grace that saturated all the believers and wrought conviction and conversion among the unbelievers. The converts were persuaded of the truth of the

gospel by the preaching of Peter and then they changed their minds and turned unto God.

The enormous number of three thousand converts were added to the church the first day, and a little later this number became five thousand. Could this rate of increase be kept up, Christianity would swiftly march around the world.

**Why has not this rapid growth been maintained? Has the arm of God been shortened, or the Holy Spirit lost his quickening power? Or has our faith been weakened and have we lost our grip on God?**

The scene at Pentecost closed with an outburst of enthusiasm in which the believers held all their goods in common; and while this rule would not work well with us and did not even work well with them, its spirit of brotherhood was something splendid and shines as a star across all these centuries.

Pentecost was followed by persecution that turned Jerusalem into a flaming volcano spouting fire and blood against the Christians, and they were scattered everywhere, like flying sparks to kindle centers of conflagration elsewhere.

One of these sparks lighted in Samaria, a hard and hostile field for Jewish and Christian propaganda, but the preaching of Christ began to win converts and presently there was great joy in that city.

Help was needed, and Peter and John came down from Jerusalem and lent a helping hand. John had once wanted to burn a Samaritan town, but he is now a changed man and is more like Christ, for he prayed for them that they might be baptized with the beneficent fire of the Holy Spirit.

**When Peter and John had completed their work in Samaria, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel, however, as they passed through Samaritan villages, and thus illustrating the value of wayside ministries.**

### *5. Worldwide Missions*

Paul next takes up the story of the widening spread of the gospel. He saw a vision that opened a new world to him, and all great achievements are first born in the imagination and set the heart on fire with purpose and endeavor.

Visions, however, will avail nothing and quickly vanish from the sky, if they are not turned into advance and victory. We see things in order that we may say them and do them.

Paul was in the habit of obeying his heavenly visions, and so he forthwith loosed from Troas and took the mighty step of crossing the sea and setting foot on another continent.

This was one of the greatest leaps in advance ever taken in this world, and we are all reaping the far-reaching results of it today.

The first thing Paul did on the new continent was not to attempt some wholesale or spectacular achievement, but to go to a humble prayer meeting, mostly attended by women, and there pray and speak. Great things have small beginnings and we must not be too fast or impatient with humble means and a small and unpromising start in our Christian work.

Paul only won a woman at this prayer meeting, but a woman is no small start in any enterprise, and that first convert in Europe has become a great host with women still carrying the banner of the cross.

We are given two late glimpses into the life of Paul, but though he is in prison he is still at the work of preaching the gospel; though bound with fetters himself, yet he more than any other man helped to break the bonds of the gospel and give it free course in the world.

For a final look at worldwide missions we are taken back to the great prophet of the Old Testament and given his picture of a new Branch out of the old stump of the house of David, who grows up as a Shoot and spreads his branches far and drops his fruit upon all lands. He has in him a spirit that opens a new chapter in history in that he has the spirit of knowledge and sound judgment and reverence and will rule righteously and will regard the interests of the poor and the meek.

His reign will have a transforming effect on nature itself as it will first purify and harmonize men and they will treat animals in a just and kind spirit and this will go far towards healing the enmity between men and the animal world; at any rate it will

transform men from fighting animals into redeemed spirits and brothers.

Then there will be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, and the worldwide mission of the Saviour will be fulfilled.

### Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give a brief account of how monotheistic faith began with Abraham and broadened out into a nation.
2. Name some of the principal prophets of the Old Testament and state their distinctive messages.
3. What was the principal message in the preaching of Jesus?
4. Trace the widening course of the gospel in the early church.
5. What is our part in the worldwide missions of today?

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